



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY — 23 MAY 2022



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 Misspeak: officials walk back Biden</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/other/biden-misspeaks-on-taiwan-says-us-military-would-intervene/ar-AAXBoas">https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/other/biden-misspeaks-on-taiwan-says-us-military-would-intervene/ar-AAXBoas</a>
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- President Joe Biden said the US military would intervene to defend Taiwan in any attack from China, comments that appeared to break from the longstanding US policy of “strategic ambiguity” before they were walked back by White House officials.</p> <p>Asked during a press briefing on Monday in Tokyo whether the US would be willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan after not doing so in Ukraine, Biden said “yes -- it’s a commitment we made.”</p> <p>“We agree with the One China policy, we signed onto it and all the attendant agreements made from there,” Biden added. “But the idea that -- that it can be taken by force, just taken by force, is just not -- it’s just not appropriate. It will dislocate the entire region and be another action similar to what happened in Ukraine.”</p> <p>“It’s a burden that’s even stronger,” he added.</p> <p>Earlier in the briefing, Biden had said that US policy toward Taiwan “has not changed at all.” A White House spokeswoman repeated that comment after Biden’s remarks, saying the president reiterated the US’s “One China Policy” and its commitment under the <a href="#">Taiwan Relations Act</a> to provide Taiwan with the military means to defend itself.</p> <p>White House officials later said that Biden simply meant the US would provide military equipment to Taiwan, not send troops to defend the island if China attacks, which would constitute a landmark shift in policy.</p> <p>Since taking office, Biden has repeatedly used language about Taiwan that <a href="#">appeared</a> to alter policy in place since around the time the US switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing. Last year, Biden or his aides needed to clarify his remarks on Taiwan on at least four separate occasions, including his description of the island as “independent” -- China’s oft-stated red line for an invasion.</p> <p>His comments on Monday were particularly striking because they came at a high-profile event on his first trip to Asia. The US policy of “strategic ambiguity” on Taiwan, which Biden has <a href="#">backed repeatedly</a> during his time in Washington, is intended to minimize the risk of a direct conflict with China, which claims the separately governed island as part of its territory despite never controlling it.</p> <p>Biden’s remarks angered Beijing, which has warned the US repeatedly over its increased support for Taiwan. Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Monday said China deplored Biden’s comments and said the US should refrain from sending the wrong message “to avoid causing grave damage to bilateral relations.”</p> <p>“On issues bearing on China’s core interests, including its sovereignty and territorial integrity, there is no room for compromise or concession,” Wang said.</p> <p>‘Dangerous Situation’</p>

	<p>Yang Jiechi, Beijing's top diplomat, <a href="#">last week</a> issued a similar warning to National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.</p> <p>"If the US side insists on playing the Taiwan card and goes further and further down the wrong road, it will certainly lead to a dangerous situation," he said.</p> <p>Taiwan thanked Biden for his remarks, saying they showed the US's promises toward the island were "rock solid."</p> <p>"Our government remains unwavering in its resolve to firmly defend Taiwan's freedom, democracy and security," Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "We will continue to enhance our self-defense capabilities, and deepen cooperation with like-minded countries including the U.S. and Japan to jointly safeguard security in the Taiwan Strait and rule-based international order."</p> <p>In May 2021, Biden's Asia czar Kurt Campbell told a Financial Times conference that there would be "significant downsides" if the US declared it would defend Taiwan from a Chinese attack. He called for maintaining "strategic ambiguity" toward the island, the newspaper <a href="#">reported</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Americans 'checked out' on Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3496253-as-cases-rise-americans-are-checked-out-on-covid-19/">https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3496253-as-cases-rise-americans-are-checked-out-on-covid-19/</a>
GIST	<p>COVID-19 cases are on the rise, but many Americans are over thinking of the virus as a crisis.</p> <p>Even in blue cities, restaurants are packed with people, and many Americans don't wear masks even on the subway or on airplanes.</p> <p>Amid this national attitude, it may be extremely difficult for local or national leaders to try to reimpose any COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>An Axios-Ipsos poll <a href="#">this week</a> found just 36 percent of Americans said there was significant risk in returning to their "normal pre-coronavirus life."</p> <p>At the same time, cases are rising to over 100,000 per day.</p> <p>About 18 percent of the U.S. population now lives in "high" risk areas where the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges everyone to wear masks indoors, and another 27 percent lives in "medium" areas where higher-risk people should consider wearing masks.</p> <p>But experts say that the average American is not constantly checking the CDC risk levels in their area. "People have checked out a little bit," said Chris Jackson, senior vice president at the polling firm Ipsos. "People aren't as tuned in."</p> <p>While CDC Director Rochelle Walensky this week called on Americans in "high" risk areas to wear masks, there has not been a similar push from President Biden, who has the biggest megaphone in the government.</p> <p>Unlike earlier in his tenure, Biden has not been issuing sustained warnings about COVID-19, instead focusing on the war in Ukraine and efforts to fight rising prices.</p> <p>This week, New York City Mayor Eric Adams (D), often seen as an ideological ally of Biden, declined to reimpose mask mandates despite the city rising to a "high" COVID-19 level.</p> <p>"It appears as though there's a new norm that is settling in our city and our country," Adams said. "Variants are going to come. If every variant that comes, we move into shutdown thoughts, we move into panicking, we're not going to function as a city."</p>

[Andy Slavitt](#), the Biden administration's former senior adviser on COVID-19 response, acknowledged the difficulties in responding given current attitudes.

"You have to understand that at this point in time that you can't make people necessarily care more than they do," he said, saying there are "fewer policy levers," available.

He called for a "middle zone conversation" on masks, where people could be encouraged to wear them in certain instances even if they are not mandated.

Unlike in the early days of the pandemic, there are tools available that help make the virus more manageable and reduce the need for tighter restrictions.

Vaccines and booster shots provide strong protection against severe illness and hospitalization. The Pfizer treatment pills known as Paxlovid reduce the risk of severe illness or death by roughly 90 percent if taken within five days of the onset of symptoms.

But even funding in Congress to boost supplies of treatments and purchase updated vaccines for the fall is stalled, a sign of the diminishing political appetite for the COVID-19 response.

The U.S. passing 1 million deaths from the virus this week did little to shake up the environment.

The fall and winter pose an even greater risk as the weather gets colder, and as the virus continues to evolve. There is a potential for a new variant to circulate that evades the current vaccines' protection even more.

Jackson of Ipsos polling said there is at least some room for attitudes to change if the situation gets significantly worse, noting that only about one-third of Americans said the pandemic is "over."

"It's not necessarily something they're going to shut their lives down about, but when we ask point blank, 'Is the pandemic over?' two thirds say, 'no,' " he noted.

Hospitalizations are still relatively low, compared with spikes earlier in the pandemic, but they are on the rise, with over 20,000 people in the hospital with the virus, according to a New York Times tracker.

Deaths are at a relative low, but there are still around 300 Americans dying from the virus every day.

White House COVID-19 response coordinator Ashish Jha this week said deaths have not risen along with cases in part because of the effect of treatments like Paxlovid, but those stores are at risk of running out without new funds.

"We're using therapeutics to save lives; we've got to continue doing that," Jha said. "At some point, we're going to run out of the treatments we have. And without additional resources, we will find ourselves in the fall or winter with people getting infected and no treatments available for them because we will have run out."

Slavitt said the administration's main focus should be getting funding from Congress and working on updated vaccines.

"My own view is a little bit soured that human nature is such that, you know, whatever science makes easy, people might do," he said. "But whatever requires even the slightest bit of sacrifice, or compromise for the sake of some other unknown person getting infected, is a much harder stretch and a much harder messaging."

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-average-age-of-vehicles-on-u-s-roadways-hits-a-record-12-2-years-11653303602">https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-average-age-of-vehicles-on-u-s-roadways-hits-a-record-12-2-years-11653303602</a>
GIST	<p>The average age of vehicles on U.S. roadways edged higher in 2021, hitting a record of 12.2 years, as Americans challenged by high car prices and slim pickings on dealer lots held on to cars longer.</p> <p>This was the fifth straight year the average vehicle age in the U.S. has increased, according to new data released Monday by research firm S&amp;P Global Mobility.</p> <p>Vehicles on average have been getting older in the U.S. for the past two decades as quality has improved and cars generally are lasting longer, analysts say.</p> <p>During the pandemic, the trend has only accelerated, largely because of a computer-chip shortage that has curbed factory output and left dealership lots bare, S&amp;P Global Mobility said.</p> <p>With car supplies constrained, prices have also soared on both new and used vehicles, resulting in more shoppers choosing to delay purchases. The <a href="#">average vehicle age crossed 12 years</a> for the first time in 2020, the firm found.</p> <p>“You can’t find a replacement for a reasonable cost,” said Todd Campau, associate director of aftermarket solutions at S&amp;P Global Mobility.</p> <p>With drivers hanging on to vehicles longer, the percentage of cars and trucks scrapped—or taken out of use—each year fell to a two-decade low of 4.2% in 2021, according to S&amp;P Global Mobility.</p> <p>Meanwhile, drivers are putting more miles on their vehicles, as they get back on the road following a period of lockdowns and travel restrictions during the early days of the Covid-19 crisis. Last year, light vehicles in the U.S. traveled an average of about 12,300 miles, up 10% from 2020, S&amp;P Global Mobility found.</p> <p>Trina McCray is among those reluctant to give up her current vehicle, a 2014 Toyota Avalon that recently needed a \$1,200 repair on the alternator. The Florida resident said she considered replacing it with a similar model, but quickly changed her mind when she saw the <a href="#">elevated prices dealers were charging</a>.</p> <p>“I just decided that it wasn’t worth me trying to find something,” Ms. McCray said.</p> <p>The upward pressure on vehicle ages could last through this year and into 2023, the firm said. The auto industry continues to deal with a range of challenges that are preventing car companies from restocking selling lots, including the computer-chip shortage that is stretching into another year and more recent supply-chain disruptions like those linked to the Russia-Ukraine crisis, it added.</p> <p><a href="#">New-vehicle prices also continue to rise</a> with auto executives saying the inventory crunch on selling lots could spill into next year. For instance, the average price paid in April 2021 for a new 2021 model-year vehicle was \$38,585, according to J.D. Power. In January 2022—nine months later—that same model-year vehicle was selling for an average of \$48,765 as a slightly used vehicle.</p> <p>Buyers are also paying <a href="#">near-record sums for used vehicles</a>, although in recent months they have <a href="#">started to see some relief</a> with transaction prices starting to soften after a prolonged period of steady increases.</p> <p>“Right now, there is no horizon where I can say we’re going to reach that inflection and start to go back down,” Mr. Campau said of the average vehicle age. He added that during economic crises, buyers tend to hold on to vehicles longer, a trend that was also observed during the 2008-2009 financial crisis.</p> <p>While overall vehicles are getting older, there is one niche of the car market where the average age is in decline: electric vehicles. The average age of an EV was 3.8 years in 2021, down from 3.9 years in 2020, S&amp;P Global Mobility said. More widespread adoption of electric vehicles could potentially lower the age</p>

	<p>of the average American car, but that shift likely won't be noticeable until the next decade, Mr. Campau said.</p> <p>For now, the need to fix and maintain these aging vehicles is driving more business for repair shops, he added.</p> <p>The average revenue per service visit hit a record of \$514 in April, according to Xtime, a software-focused brand under Cox Automotive that tracks this data. That figure is about 30% higher than the \$394 per-service transaction recorded in January 2018, when Xtime started collecting data.</p> <p>Bobby Colemire, owner of Crowes Master Tech Auto Repair in Lexington, Ky., said he is seeing a big uptick in demand for service work and he has had to hire more people because of it. Before the pandemic, customers facing expensive repairs would often put that money toward a new vehicle, he added.</p> <p>"Now, we're getting much fewer refusals based on price," Mr. Colemire said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Gas shortages, record high prices</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3481448/gas-shortages-and-record-high-prices-plague-washington-drivers/">https://mynorthwest.com/3481448/gas-shortages-and-record-high-prices-plague-washington-drivers/</a>
GIST	<p>Gas stations in Washington are resetting their price boards to accommodate double digits in preparation for fuel prices potentially reaching \$10 a gallon.</p> <p>The move comes as several gas stations in the state have already run out of fuel.</p> <p>However, Governor Jay Inslee remains firm on not lifting the gas tax he proposed, which would levy a six-cents-per-gallon tax on fuel refined in Washington and imported to states with lower state gas taxes than Washington.</p> <p>"If we simply eliminate the gas tax, here's what will happen," Inslee said in a press conference. "The oil companies will just increase their prices to the same pain point. And what would happen is that those 16 cents or whatever you did, instead of going to the coffers where we can build roads, it would just go to the oil companies and their profits."</p> <p>As proposed, the tax paid by out-of-state consumers would generate an estimated \$2 billion for Washington transportation projects, such as fixing highways and bridges, building new ferries, and repairs of the aging I-5 bridge over the Columbia River between Washington and Oregon.</p> <p>Not everyone agrees with Inslee's stance, including Washington Senator Simon Sefzik (R).</p> <p>"This sort of idea that if you have any sort of tax relief, it's going to just be some sort of pay cut to gas companies, that that just isn't the case," Sefzik said on the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. "And we could have done this in Washington in a way that would have provided immediate tax relief to the people of Washington, but didn't. So I think at this point, it's ultimately prioritizing politics over the people of Washington State. It's an unwillingness to roll up our sleeves, go back to a legislative session, and provide this type of relief to people."</p> <p>The average price of a gallon of gas in Washington state is \$5.18 — well above the national average of \$4.59 as of Thursday, according to AAA. Gas is 50% more expensive nationwide than it was this time last year.</p> <p>Some have interpreted this as the governor simply refusing to help the pending gas crisis, including Rantz, who called him "arguably the nation's most economically illiterate governor."</p> <p>"While supply is eventually replenished, the demand is as high as the prices, putting a strain on people like Kenneth Leach," said Jason Rantz on Tucker Carlson Tonight. "Three years ago, he was diagnosed with</p>



	<p>leukemia and travels from his home in eastern Washington to Seattle three times a month for medical care. Those trips cost him and his wife about \$120 each time!”</p> <p>“The gas station owners in Seattle aren’t getting cryptic messages from oil execs to raise prices at the pump,” Rantz continued. “The gas pump price comes from on-market conditions impacted by supply and demand, and how much their gas delivery runs will cost. Obviously, Washington isn’t the only state hurting — the entire west coast is paying more than \$5 a gallon and there’s no end in sight.”</p> <p>The gas crisis has many worried as the state continues its inflation ascent.</p> <p>“I remember as a very young girl the Carter gas lines,” Deborah Railton posted on Facebook. “My Dad had to plan a four-hour window for sitting in a line, fingers crossed that the station didn’t run out.</p> <p>“A man called into a radio station,” Railton continued. “He said he filled his tank for \$35 ... it was for his lawnmower.”</p> <p>California has the most expensive gas prices as of this reporting, with a gallon going for \$6.064. Nevada is the second-most at \$5.24, followed by Washington and Oregon (\$5.141). Oklahoma remains the lowest at \$4.033, followed by Kansas at \$4.048.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 India severe heat wave; millions at risk</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://news.trust.org/item/20220520165631-zdq6f/">https://news.trust.org/item/20220520165631-zdq6f/</a>
GIST	<p>NOIDA, India, May 23 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - As the scorching sun beat down on his fruit cart, Mohammad Ikrar dreaded another day of tossing out dozens of rotting mangoes and melons - a regular practice as India grappled with an unprecedented heatwave this month.</p> <p>The 38-year-old does not own a refrigerator, meaning his fruit quickly spoils. By the end of the day, any leftover produce is usually only good to be fed to passing stray cows.</p> <p>Since April, Ikrar said he has lost up to 3,000 rupees (\$39) a week - nearly half of his average weekly earnings.</p> <p>"This heat is torturous. But if I want to buy an AC (air conditioner) or fridge one day, I have to do this," said Ikrar, wearing a full sleeve shirt and white headwrap to keep cool in the 44 degrees Celsius (111.2F) heat.</p> <p>Heavy rain and thunderstorms in the New Delhi area early on Monday brought the scorching temperatures down to about 20C, with Mahesh Palawat, vice president of Skymet, a private weather forecasting agency <a href="#">saying</a> in a social media post that the heatwave would not come back "anytime soon" in the region.</p> <p>But temperatures are set to soar again to about 40C later in the week, according to India's weather office.</p> <p>Monday's storm knocked out power in large parts of the capital city - a problem Ikrar has become accustomed to this summer.</p> <p>At home, he and his family suffer hours-long power cuts day and night, rendering the ceiling fan useless in their one-room house in Noida, a satellite city of New Delhi.</p> <p>He sends all three of his children to a school fitted with air coolers for "respite" from the heat.</p> <p>"I sweat all day, then sweat all night. There is no way to properly cool off. I haven't experienced anything like this since I moved here eight years ago," he said.</p>

Ikrar provides a snapshot of the threat Indians face from a lack of access to cooling amid widespread blackouts.

Almost 323 million people across the country are at high risk from extreme heat and a lack of cooling equipment such as fans and refrigerators, found a [report](#) released last week by Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), a U.N.-backed organisation.

India topped a list of "critical" countries, also including China, Indonesia and Pakistan, which have the largest populations facing heat-related dangers ranging from immediate deaths from overheating to impacts on food security and incomes.

Temperatures in the New Delhi area soared above 49C (120F) in some regions in mid-May after India recorded its [hottest March](#) in 122 years and an unusually hot April.

Temperatures are expected to [cool](#) as monsoon rains arrive in June.

#### 'WORRYING URBAN TRENDS'

India's electricity demand has hit a record high with a surge in the use of air conditioning triggering the worst [power crisis](#) in more than six years.

But, like Ikrar, not everyone can beat the heat.

Although nearly all households in India have access to electricity, only a fraction of its 1.4-billion population owns any cooling appliances, found SE4ALL.

As demand for cooling will soar in coming years, it will also add pressure to India's over-stretched electricity systems and lead to a potential increase in planet-warming emissions, said Brian Dean, head of energy efficiency and cooling at SE4ALL.

"(This) in turn further exacerbates the risk of longer and more extreme heatwaves," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

He urged authorities to quickly implement the [India Cooling Action Plan](#), launched in 2019, which aims to cut cooling demand by up to 25% by 2038 through measures including developing new cooling technology and designing buildings with natural airflow.

Scientists have linked the early onset of an intense summer to climate change, and said more than a billion people in India and neighbouring [Pakistan](#) were in some way at risk from the extreme heat.

SE4ALL found Pakistan's largest city of Karachi - along with many others including Mumbai and Dhaka in South Asia - are among those most at risk from inadequate cooling.

Farhan Anwar, a Karachi-based urban planning consultant, said the city's poor were the main victims of extreme heat, likely caused by the so-called "urban heat island effect" in which concrete-heavy landscapes push up temperatures.

"Unplanned densification, automobile intensive mobility choices and rapidly reducing green cover are worrying urban trends," Anwar said, calling for action to boost green spaces.

#### ACTION NEEDED

In India, government data shows at least 25 people have died from heat stroke since late March, the highest toll in the past five years.

The official number is just "the tip of the iceberg", said Dileep Mavalankar, head of the Indian Institute of Public Health, a private university in Gandhinagar in the western state of Gujarat.



Heat is a largely invisible killer which can be hard to pinpoint as a cause of death, he said, especially as it often affects elderly and unwell people and can be caused by indirect exposure such as being trapped in small, poorly ventilated homes.

Such indirect exposure cases make up about nine in 10 heat deaths, he said, with India likely counting only about 10% of the true total.

Mavalankar helped implement South Asia's first [Heat Action Plan](#) (HAP) in Ahmedabad in Gujarat in 2013, after the city saw more than 1,300 deaths in a 2010 heatwave. He credited the HAP for saving up to 1,200 deaths every summer.

The HAP, which includes early warning text messages to mobile phones, has [expanded](#) to nearly two dozen heatwave-prone states and more than 130 cities and districts.

The plan also directs people to seek respite from heatwaves in "cooling centres" such as air-conditioned public buildings, shops and malls, temples and parks. For some, they can be life-saving.

Mavalankar and SE4ALL's Dean both called for the broader use of "cool roofs" with reflective surfaces or coatings to reduce temperatures in low-income and informal housing.

From building heat-resistant homes to creating more green spaces, Mavalankar said prompt action is needed to help the poor and vulnerable survive a [hotter world](#).

"Temperatures may increase by three to five degrees in coming summers," he warned.

"We have to prepare right now."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 Ruble holds firm; back to multi-year highs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/rouble-firms-heading-back-towards-multi-year-highs-vs-dollar-euro-2022-05-23/">https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/rouble-firms-heading-back-towards-multi-year-highs-vs-dollar-euro-2022-05-23/</a>
GIST	<p>May 23 (Reuters) - The Russian rouble strengthened on Monday, heading back towards multi-year highs hit against the dollar and euro last week, supported by capital controls and an upcoming month-end tax period.</p> <p>At 0754 GMT, the rouble was 2.5% stronger against the dollar at 58.74 , not far from 57.0750, its strongest mark since late March 2018, hit on Friday.</p> <p>It had gained 2.3% to trade at 61.38 versus the euro , nearing its strongest point since June 2015 of 59.02, also reached on Friday.</p> <p>The rouble has firmed about 30% to the dollar this year despite a full-scale economic crisis in Russia, making it the <a href="#">world's best-performing currency</a>, albeit artificially supported by controls imposed in late February to shield Russia's financial sector after it sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine.</p> <p>The rouble is being driven by export-focused companies that are obliged to convert their foreign currency revenue after Western sanctions froze nearly half of Russia's gold and forex reserves.</p> <p>Russian demands that foreign buyers pay for gas in roubles has also contributed to the rouble's recent rally, analysts said last week.</p> <p>The supply of foreign currency from exporters, high oil prices and an upcoming month-end tax period that usually prompts export-focused companies to convert their forex revenues into roubles to meet local liabilities are all supporting the Russian currency, said BCS Express in a note.</p>

	<p>The Vedomosti daily reported on Monday, citing sources, that the central bank had started purchasing foreign currency in order to stop the rouble's uncontrolled strengthening.</p> <p>The central bank denied the report, saying "this information does not correspond to reality."</p> <p>If the central bank were carrying out such interventions, the effect on the rouble rate would be more noticeable, said Promsvyazbank analysts.</p> <p>"Nevertheless, such news could influence the behaviour of market participants and provoke a weakening of the rouble."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 Life in Russia profoundly changed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-politics-41f8ccd1e1d75a062275181d9288d378">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-politics-41f8ccd1e1d75a062275181d9288d378</a>
GIST	<p>When Vladimir Putin announced the invasion of Ukraine, war seemed far away from Russian territory. Yet within days the conflict came home — not with cruise missiles and mortars but in the form of unprecedented and unexpectedly extensive volleys of sanctions by Western governments and economic punishment by corporations.</p> <p>Three months after the Feb. 24 invasion, many ordinary Russians are reeling from those blows to their livelihoods and emotions. Moscow's vast shopping malls have turned into eerie expanses of shuttered storefronts once occupied by Western retailers.</p> <p>McDonald's — whose opening in Russia in 1990 was a cultural phenomenon, a shiny modern convenience coming to a dreary country ground down by limited choices — pulled out of Russia entirely in response to its invasion of Ukraine. IKEA, the epitome of affordable modern comforts, suspended operations. Tens of thousands of once-secure jobs are now suddenly in question in a very short time.</p> <p>Major industrial players including oil giants BP and Shell and automaker Renault walked away, despite their huge investments in Russia. Shell has estimated it will lose about \$5 billion by trying to unload its Russian assets.</p> <p>While the multinationals were leaving, thousands of Russians who had the economic means to do so were also fleeing, frightened by harsh new government moves connected to the war that they saw as a plunge into full totalitarianism. Some young men may have also fled in fear that the Kremlin would impose a mandatory draft to feed its war machine.</p> <p>But fleeing had become much harder than it once was — the European Union's 27 nations, along with the United States and Canada had banned flights to and from Russia. The Estonian capital of Tallinn, once an easy long-weekend destination 90 minutes by air from Moscow, suddenly took at least 12 hours to reach on a route through Istanbul.</p> <p>Even vicarious travel via the Internet and social media has narrowed for Russians. Russia in March banned Facebook and Instagram — although that can be circumvented by using VPNs — and shut access to foreign media websites, including the BBC, the U.S. government-funded Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.</p> <p>After Russian authorities passed a law calling for up to 15 years' imprisonment for stories that include "fake news" about the war, many significant independent news media shut down or suspended operations. Those included the Ekho Moskvyy radio station and Novaya Gazeta, the newspaper whose editor Dmitry Muratov shared the most recent Nobel Peace Prize.</p> <p>The psychological cost of the repressions, restrictions and shrinking opportunities could be high on ordinary Russians, although difficult to measure. Although some public opinion polls in Russia suggest</p>

support for the Ukraine war is strong, the results are likely skewed by respondents who stay silent, wary of expressing their genuine views.

Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Moscow Center wrote in a commentary that Russian society right now is gripped by an “aggressive submission” and that the degradation of social ties could accelerate.

“The discussion gets broader and broader. You can call your compatriot — a fellow citizen, but one who happens to have a different opinion — a “traitor” and consider them an inferior kind of person. You can, like the most senior state officials, speculate freely and quite calmly on the prospects of nuclear war. (That’s) something that was certainly never permitted in Soviet times during Pax Atomica, when the two sides understood that the ensuing damage was completely unthinkable,” he wrote.

“Now that understanding is waning, and that is yet another sign of the anthropological disaster Russia is facing,” he said.

The economic consequences have yet to fully play out.

In the early days of the war, the Russian ruble lost half its value. But government efforts to shore it up have actually raised its value to higher than its level before the invasion.

But in terms of economic activity, “that’s a completely different story,” said Chris Weafer, a veteran Russia economy analyst at Macro-Advisory.

“We see deterioration in the economy now across a broad range of sectors. Companies are warning that they’re running out of inventories of spare parts. A lot of companies put their workers on part time work and others are warning to them they have to shut down entirely. So there’s a real fear that unemployment will rise during the summer months, that there will be a big drop in consumption and retail sales and investment,” he told The Associated Press.

The comparatively strong ruble, however heartening it may seem, also poses problems for the national budget, Weafer said.

“They receive their revenue effectively in its foreign currency from the exporters and their payments are in rubles. So the stronger the ruble, then it means the less money that they actually have to spend,” he said. “(That) also makes Russian exporters less competitive, because they’re more expensive on the world stage.”

If the war drags on, more companies could exit Russia. Weafer suggested that those companies who have only suspended operations might resume them if a cease-fire and peace deal for Ukraine are reached, but he said the window for this could be closing.

“If you walk around shopping malls in Moscow, you can see that many of the fashion stores, Western business groups, have simply pulled down the shutters. Their shelves are still full, the lights are still on. They’re simply just not open. So they haven’t pulled out yet. They’re waiting to see what happens next,” he explained.

Those companies will soon be pressed to resolve the limbo that their Russian businesses are in, Weafer said.

“We are now getting to the stage where companies are starting to run out of time, or maybe run out of patience,” he said.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Ukraine war crimes trial: life in prison
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-kharkiv-2fb1355f5c0b5724adfc5b4367807335">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-kharkiv-2fb1355f5c0b5724adfc5b4367807335</a>

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Ukrainian court sentenced a 21-year-old Russian soldier to life in prison Monday for killing a Ukrainian civilian, sealing the first guilty conviction for war crimes since Moscow's invasion three months ago.

Sgt. Vadim Shishimarin pleaded guilty to shooting a Ukrainian civilian in the head in a village in the northeastern Sumy region in the early days of the war.

He testified that he shot the man after being ordered to do so. He told the court that an officer insisted that the Ukrainian man, who was speaking on his cellphone, could pinpoint their location to the Ukrainian forces.

The sentencing came as the 3-month-old war helped push the number of people displaced worldwide to the highest level on record level, according to the United Nations, with more 100 million people driven from their homes across the globe.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the World Economic Forum as it opened in Davos, Switzerland, calling for "maximum" sanctions against Russia.

He said by video that sanctions needed to go further to stop Russia's aggression, including an oil embargo, all of its banks blocked and cutting off trade with Russia completely.

Zelenskyy says his country has slowed Russian advances and his people's courage has stirred unseen unity of the democratic world.

On the battlefield, Russian forces have stepped up shelling in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland as they press their offensive in the region that is now the focus of fighting.

Grinding battles in the Donbas, where Ukrainian and Russian forces are fighting town by town, have forced many civilians to flee their homes.

In Tokyo on Monday, U.S. President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida joined in condemning Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Earlier on his trip to Asia, Biden signed legislation granting Ukraine \$40 billion more in U.S. support for its defense against the Russian attack.

Western support — both financial and military — has been key to Ukraine's defense, helping their outgunned and outnumbered forces to repel Russia's attempt to take the capital of Kyiv and fight them to a standstill in other places. In the face of those setbacks, Moscow has outlined more limited goals in Ukraine, with its sights now on trying to expand the territory that Russia-backed separatists have held since 2014.

Ukrainian forces dug in around Sievierodonetsk, the main city under Ukrainian control in the Luhansk province of the Donbas, as Russia intensified efforts to capture it. Gov. Serhiy Haidai accused the Russians of "simply intentionally trying to destroy the city ... engaging in a scorched-earth approach."

Haidai said Sunday that the Russians had occupied several towns and cities in Luhansk after indiscriminate, 24-hour shelling and concentrating forces and weaponry there, bringing in troops from Kharkiv to the northwest, Mariupol to the south, and from inside Russia.

But the Ukrainian military said that Russian forces were unsuccessful in their attack on Oleksandrivka, a village outside of Sievierodonetsk.

Ukraine's parliament voted Sunday to extend martial law and mobilize its armed forces for a third time, until Aug. 23. Ukrainian officials have said little since the war began about the extent of their country's casualties, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday that 50 to 100 Ukrainian fighters were being killed, apparently each day, in the east.

	While the east is now the focus of fighting, the conflict is not confined there. Powerful explosions were heard early Monday in Korosten, about 160 kilometers (100 miles) west of Kyiv, the town's deputy mayor said. It was the third straight day of apparent attacks in the Zhytomyr District, Ukrainian news agencies reported.
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Calif. cases and concerns keep rising</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/another-bummer-coronavirus-summer-for-california-cases-keep-rising-along-with-concerns/ar-AAXz7ua">https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/another-bummer-coronavirus-summer-for-california-cases-keep-rising-along-with-concerns/ar-AAXz7ua</a>
GIST	<p>With coronavirus cases on the rise, California finds itself in a familiar, if frustrating, position — with the threat of another wave looming as summer fast approaches.</p> <p>Coronavirus cases are increasing, in many areas at an accelerating pace. Authorities have not yet expressed alarm about the state of California's hospitals or imposed far-reaching new rules to blunt the virus' spread.</p> <p>But officials say it is possible healthcare systems could once again come under strain unless the transmission rate is restrained — underscoring how vital it is for residents and businesses to make use of the protective tools at their disposal.</p> <p>"Residents, workers and businesses need to not shy away from reinstating or adhering to safety practices that are known to reduce transmission," said Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer. "This includes indoor masking, testing when people are sick, exposed or gathering, and staying up to date on vaccinations."</p> <p>L.A. County on Friday extended its order requiring mask use on public transit, including in rail and bus stations; in indoor areas of airports and seaports; and in ride-sharing vehicles. Vaccine clinics this week also <a href="#">began</a> making available COVID-19 booster shots for children ages 5 to 11, following the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation Thursday that these youths should get one.</p> <p>The Berkeley public school system <a href="#">announced</a> Friday a new order to reinstate an indoor mask mandate for students and staff for the remainder of the school year, effective Monday, including indoor graduations.</p> <p>Berkeley schools are seeing an increase in clusters of coronavirus cases, and the surge has proved so disruptive that "we have only been able to fill about 50% of our teacher absences with substitute teachers," the school district said in a <a href="#">statement</a>.</p> <p>"This means that in schools across the district administrators are, once again, working in our classrooms as teachers while teachers are forgoing their planning periods to fill in for colleagues who are ill," the school system said.</p> <p><b>What are conditions like?</b></p> <p>Fourteen of California's 58 counties are at the "medium" COVID-19 <a href="#">community level outlined</a> by the CDC.</p> <p>Counties in this category, the middle on the <a href="#">agency's three-tier scale</a>, are experiencing elevated levels of coronavirus transmission. In those counties, residents should "consider taking prevention measures based on their own risk, like avoiding crowds, wearing a mask, increasing their testing, especially before gathering with others indoors," according to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky.</p> <p>Los Angeles moved into the medium category on Thursday, and is the only Southern California county at that level. Also in the medium category are eight of the nine counties in the San Francisco Bay Area (the lone exception is Napa County) and the coastal counties north of the Bay Area, as well as Santa Cruz County and Yolo County.</p>

Reaching this category “is concerning, since it could signal that the increases that we’re seeing in our COVID cases may soon put pressure on our healthcare resources,” Ferrer said Thursday.

So far, no California counties [are in the worst, or “high,” community level](#), which denotes a heightened level of coronavirus transmission and hospitals seeing significant impacts from COVID-19.

“We need to do everything we can to stay out of ‘high,’” Ferrer said. “Nobody here wants to see us move to any categorization that could possibly cause stress on our healthcare system or result in more people getting sick or dying.”

#### **What does that mean?**

Being in the medium category does not trigger any new widespread rules or health guidance. However, L.A. County officials have said reaching high would prompt the return of a local universal public indoor mask mandate — which hasn’t been in place [since early March](#).

Other counties in California have not outlined specific plans to reinstate a local mask order if cases or hospitalizations continue to worsen.

Masks are still required in healthcare settings, nursing homes, jails and homeless shelters and in certain other settings in some areas of the state. The San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit system has enacted a mask mandate. Oakland [requires](#) patrons attending indoor events with 2,500 or more people to wear a mask.

On Tuesday, a number of speakers at a health commission meeting urged San Francisco officials to reinstate a universal mask mandate.

But the city's health officer, Dr. Susan Philip, indicated she was not inclined to pursue that at this time, given the widespread availability of high-quality masks, vaccinations and boosters and anti-COVID drugs.

San Francisco has been at the medium COVID-19 community level for three weeks, sent into this tier because of its high case rate. But coronavirus-positive hospitalizations remain relatively low, Dr. Grant Colfax, the city's public health director, told health commissioners this week.

"Our hospital capacity ... remains relatively robust," Colfax said.

Even though a face covering requirement hasn’t been on the books for months, officials at the California Department of Public Health have consistently [strongly recommended](#) residents mask up indoors in public.

Ferrer has also urged residents to wear high-quality masks — like KF94, KN95 and N95 respirators — while indoors, get vaccinated and boosted, get tested when feeling sick or potentially exposed to the coronavirus, and prioritize gathering in well-ventilated areas or outdoors.

Despite the recent increases, Ferrer reiterated that she feels people can enjoy gatherings and activities, though she suggested taking prudent precautions.

“While we are disheartened that the pandemic hasn’t ended, I am reassured that with the tools at hand, we can continue to enjoy our time with each other and our participation in those activities we love,” she said.

#### **How does California compare to other parts of the country?**

The situation elsewhere in the United States is more concerning.

Nationwide, 297 counties have a high COVID-19 community level — including those that are home to New York City; Long Island, N.Y.; Detroit, Honolulu; and Milwaukee, Wis. Other areas in the high category include large swaths of upstate New York, New Jersey, Delaware and New England, including Boston; northern and eastern Pennsylvania; and all of Puerto Rico.



In these areas, which are home to 18% of the nation's population, federal health officials recommend people wear masks indoors while in public.

While they haven't ordered a new mask mandate, officials in New York City warned that "pressure on the healthcare system is increasing" and urged seniors and others at high risk of severe COVID-19 to avoid gatherings and wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings.

Officials have said the dramatic rise in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations in New York City is being fueled by BA.2.12.1, one of a family of Omicron subvariants spawned in the wake of last winter's surge.

By comparison, 483 U.S. counties — home to 28% of U.S. residents — are in medium., while the vast majority — 2,444 counties, home to 54% of U.S. residents — remain in low.

"As we're currently seeing a steady rise of cases in parts of the country, we encourage everyone to use the menu of tools we have today to prevent further infection and severe disease — including wearing a mask, getting tested, accessing treatments early if infected, and getting vaccinated or boosted, especially if you're over 50 and if your last dose was more than five months ago," Walensky said during a briefing this week.

### **What are the latest numbers?**

Statewide, officials have reported an average of roughly 12,900 new coronavirus cases a day over the last week — a 63% jump from the previous week's average, according to data compiled by The Times.

In L.A. County, officials have reported an average of about 3,200 cases per day over the last week. That's a level not seen since mid-February, when the region was still on the downslope of last winter's Omicron surge.

And officials say these numbers likely fail to capture a large amount of infections, as many people are using at-home tests — the results of which are not reliably reported to health agencies.

Test positivity remains low, but has been creeping upward. Over the last week, that metric has risen from 2.6% to 3.7% in L.A. County.

The seven-day statewide test positivity rate was 6%, according to the California Department of Public Health data made available Friday. That's up from 3.1% at the start of the month.

### **What about hospitalizations?**

As of Thursday, the number of coronavirus-positive patients [hospitalized statewide](#) was 1,708. While still significantly lower than at many other points during the pandemic, the count has jumped 28% just in the last week.

The rate of week-over-week increases in hospitalizations is accelerating. The previous statewide week-over-week increase was 19%.

In L.A. County, the most recent coronavirus-positive patient count was 401, an increase of 35% from a week ago. The prior week-over-week increase was 20%.

Many of those patients aren't necessarily hospitalized for COVID-19, though. On Tuesday, L.A. County Health Services Director Dr. Christina Ghaly said most of those who are hospitalized with a positive coronavirus test within the county's public hospital system were there for some other reason — such as a heart attack or stroke — and happened to incidentally test positive upon admission.

However, an increase in hospitalizations, Ferrer said, is "an important reminder that, for many, getting infected with COVID-19 does pose a serious risk."

### **And deaths?**

COVID-19 deaths remain stable and low at an average of about 38 per day statewide, [according to data](#) compiled by The Times.

Deaths are a lagging indicator of coronavirus spread and often don't rise until weeks after a region starts recording an increase in infections. However, officials have expressed some optimism that the widespread administration of vaccines and availability of therapeutics might blunt and potential uptick in fatalities.

"Our hope is that as more people take advantage of the protections that continue to be offered by vaccinations and boosters, the daily deaths will remain low," Ferrer said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 Russia's brutal filtration camps</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/23/europe/russia-ukraine-filtration-camps-intl-cmd/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/23/europe/russia-ukraine-filtration-camps-intl-cmd/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>Kyiv, Ukraine (CNN)"What would happen if we cut off your ear?" the soldiers asked Oleksandr Vdovychenko. Then they hit him in the head.</p> <p>The punches kept coming whenever his interrogators -- a mixture of Russian soldiers and pro-Russian separatists -- didn't like his answers, he later told his family.</p> <p>The men asked about his politics, his future plans, his views on the war. They checked his documents, took his fingerprints and stripped him to check if he had any nationalist tattoos or marks caused by wearing or carrying military equipment.</p> <p>"They were trying to beat something out of him," his daughter Maria Vdovychenko told CNN in an interview.</p> <p>Maria said her father received so many blows to his head during the interrogation last month that several medical examinations have now confirmed his sight has been permanently damaged.</p> <p>Yet Oleksandr was one of the lucky ones. He made it through "filtration."</p> <p>When Russian troops first started taking over villages and towns in eastern Ukraine in early March, following their invasion of the country, evidence began to emerge of civilians being forced to undergo humiliating identity checks and often violent questioning before being allowed to leave their homes and travel to areas still under Ukrainian control.</p> <p>Three months into the war, the dehumanizing process known as filtration has become part of the reality of life under Russian occupation.</p> <p>CNN spoke to a number of Ukrainians who have gone through the filtration process over the last two months. Many are too scared to speak publicly, fearing for the safety of relatives and friends who are still trying to escape Russian-held areas.</p> <p>All of the people CNN spoke to have described facing threats and humiliation during the process. Many have witnessed or know of people who have been picked up by Russian troops or separatist soldiers and subsequently disappeared without a trace.</p> <p>For most of the people CNN spoke to, the filtration process included document checks, interrogation, fingerprinting and a search. Many were separated from their families. Men were routinely stripped and examined.</p> <p>Lyudmyla Denisova, the Ukrainian parliament's human rights ombudsman, said earlier this month that Russian forces had created an "extensive network" of places where Ukrainians are being subjected to "filtering."</p>

She said such places have been established "in every occupied Ukrainian city" and that more than "37,000 citizens" have already gone through the procedure.

Nikolay Ryabchenko told CNN he fled Mariupol in mid-March when the city was closed and people were not allowed to move around.

"We found a way to avoid checkpoints and came to Nikolske and we stayed there for a couple of weeks," he said. "I asked everyone I met how to get out and they [said] filtration is obligatory."

Information signs that have been posted in Mariupol after Russian troops took over the city leave no room for doubt: "Evacuation can be carried out if there is a document confirming the passage of the filtration procedure." CNN has seen a photo of one such sign taken by a person who escaped the city.

"Everyone has to go through filtration, both men and women, in order to move around the city freely," 20-year old Karina, another Mariupol resident, who is only being identified by her first name due to security concerns, told CNN.

She has managed to escape Mariupol but her father, who has not yet passed the filtration process and has no idea why, is still there.

A month after being picked up by Russian soldiers on a street in Mariupol, he is still being held in what the self-declared separatist Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) in eastern Ukraine calls a "reception center" at a school in Bezimenne, around 20 miles (32 kilometers) east of Mariupol, he told his daughter.

The separatist-held Bezimenne has been used by Russian troops as a screening facility for refugees from Mariupol and surrounding areas.

In three separate statements published last week, the DPR Territorial Defense said almost 1,000 evacuees from Mariupol have been brought to the Bezimenne center in a three days. It said that as of May 17, more than 33,000 people have gone through the facility.

Earlier this month, the Russian Ministry of Defence released a video showing evacuees from Mariupol arrive in a filtration camp outside the city in busses. The ministry published the videos without saying where the refugees were taken, or when the evacuations took place. CNN has been able to geolocate the footage, and it shows that they were taken to Bezimenne.

Separately, satellite images from Maxar Technologies have showed a tent encampment being erected in the separatist-held Bezimenne as early as in March.

Karina said she had been able to speak to her father who told her that conditions there were appalling. "Some sleep on the floor, some are luckier [and sleep] on chairs, and some are even luckier and have mattresses in the gym," she said. "There's no opportunity to wash and no normal restroom. All of them were ill because it was too cold to sleep on the floor."

Karina said her father had told her the guards in the center have refused to provide any medicine to the people being held there. They are being fed watery soup and other prison-like food cooked in a field kitchen, he said.

Ombudsman Denisova said the Bezimenne center where Karina's father is being held is just one of several such facilities set up in the Donetsk region. She said Russian troops have established similar filtration camps in Dokuchaevsk, Mykilsky, Mangush, Bezymenny and Yalta.

She accused Russia of using the centers to detain and "wipe out" any "officials, members of the military or the volunteer territorial defense forces, activists or anyone they consider a threat."

Maria Vdovychenko told CNN it looked like the soldiers were trying to find anything they could say was incriminating.

"They were looking for Ukrainian-speaking people, for Ukrainian symbols, tattoos," she said, adding that the soldiers checked her phone, but didn't find anything compromising.

"We have deleted everything because people in the line told us they can look at everything -- contacts, for example, they could call some of your contacts -- and pictures ... For every Ukrainian, it is normal to have pictures in vyshyvanka [traditional Ukrainian embroidered clothing] or with a flag, or near [a] Shevchenko monument [depicting prominent Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko]," Maria said.

"I'm a bandura [traditional Ukrainian instrument] player, it wasn't good idea to show that. So I deleted that, took a couple of new pictures, and deleted my social network profiles," she added.

Michael Carpenter, the US Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), said last month there was credible reporting that "Russia's forces are rounding up the local civilian populations in these areas, detaining them in these camps, and brutally interrogating them for any supposed links to the legitimate Ukrainian government or to independent media outlets.

Speaking last week, Carpenter added: "Numerous eyewitness accounts indicate that 'filtering out' entails beating and torturing individuals to determine whether they owe even the slightest allegiance to the Ukrainian state."

Mariupol city council has accused Russian forces of using the filtration centers to identify witnesses to any "atrocities" committed by Russian troops during the battle for the control of the city. CNN could not verify that claim.

The Kremlin has denied using filtration camps to cover up wrongdoing and targeting civilians in Mariupol. The self-declared DPR has denied accusations by Ukrainian authorities of unlawful detentions, filtration and maltreatment of Ukrainian citizens and said that those arriving at what it calls reception centers are properly fed and provided medical attention.

Karina said that, according to her father, most of the men in the center have no idea why they are being held.

"They were told the filtration would take one to two days maximum and that the [process] is needed to check if they took part in hostilities," Karina told CNN. "They have been trapped there since April 12 and have no idea when they will be released."

That uncertainty makes the process terrifying for Ukrainians trying to flee to safety. Most have no idea what to expect.

Ukrainian social media pages for people stuck in Russian-controlled regions, or their families searching for them, are full of questions about filtration.

Yana, who left Berdiansk in southern Ukraine to stay with relatives in Rostov in Russia, the only place she said she was able to get to, said the process appeared to be completely random. She asked CNN not to publish her last name, fearing retribution.

"Close friends told me that they stood in line for filtration for six days, spent the nights in cars, and yet some passed quickly. I don't know why -- apparently it depends on which shift you will get," she said.

Before the war, Eugen Tuzov was a martial arts instructor in Mariupol. Now he spends most of his time trying to organize transport for people stuck in the Russian-occupied city and the surrounding areas who want to flee to places under Ukrainian control.

He, too, told CNN the filtration process at checkpoints on the roads leading out of Mariupol -- he said there were at least 27 of them -- appeared to be random.

"Everything depends on [the] shift. Someone is lucky, someone comes to a sh\*tty shift," he said.

"The DPR people were the worst -- they are disheveled, slovens, sometimes they are drunk already in the morning, behaving terribly. You see man 50, 60 years old and you can see it from his face that he drinks constantly," Ryabchenko told CNN.

Petro Andriushchenko, an adviser to the Mariupol mayor, said in a statement on Monday that Russian troops have set up five filtration points across the city.

Mariupol residents need to pass this procedure in order to receive a certificate allowing them to move around the city, he said, adding: "If this isn't a ghetto, I don't know what is."

Yana said her parents had to undergo filtration at a hospital in Donetsk, where they were taken after being wounded in a strike, having already spent more than two weeks hiding in a shelter in Mariupol with no medical help.

"People came from some service, took their fingerprints, told them this is filtration since they could not walk, but it had to be done, such rules are in the DPR," she said.

Yana said when she and her husband drove out of the area, they had to pass almost 20 checkpoints. "And at almost every checkpoint, they undressed my husband, looked for tattoos and weapons marks and asked whether he had served in the army," she said.

Tuzov said the volunteers in his transport service have similar experiences; he said some were subjected to lie detector tests and that -- as far as he knows -- at least 30 of them were detained during the process. "They were taken at checkpoints. They check phones, social networks, if you wrote something about them ... they take you away," he said.

Tuzov said he doesn't know the fate of those who have been detained. CNN has previously reported that some of those picked up in the process end up being sent to Russia.

Maria Vdovychenko said she and her family -- her parents and younger sister -- waited in Nova Yalta for about 20 days before they were allowed to go through the filtration process.

"We were told we wouldn't be able to get out without that," she told CNN. "They [said] they will just check documents and phones, and we will leave. But it wasn't as easy as they promised."

She said the family queued for two days and two nights without being allowed to leave their car. Finally, Maria and her father were taken to a small wooden structure about 200 meters away. Her younger sister and her mother, who wasn't able to walk, were told to stay in the vehicle.

While waiting to enter the makeshift building, Maria said she felt threatened. "[The soldiers] were talking among themselves. It was scary to listen to what can happen to people who didn't pass the filtration. I will remember it forever."

She said she overheard one of the soldiers guarding the site saying: "I killed 10, and didn't count further."

The reports coming from these facilities have shocked the international community and the practice was cited as one of the reasons for Russia to be suspended from the UN's Human Rights Council in April.

Despite the outrage, evidence from the ground, testimonies from those who escape and statements by the separatist authorities show Russia has only increased its use of filtration since then.

	It's not the first time either. During the war in Chechnya, Russian forces used filtration camps to separate civilians from rebel fighters. Legendary Russian investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya gathered testimony from Chechen civilians detained these centers, revealing brutal interrogation methods, torture and human rights violations. She was murdered in her Moscow apartment building in 2006.
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 New billionaire almost daily amid pandemic</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/22/economy/billionaires-poverty-oxfam-davos/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/22/economy/billionaires-poverty-oxfam-davos/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>New York (CNN Business)</b>The <a href="#">Covid-19 pandemic</a> has been good for the wallets of the wealthy.</p> <p>Some 573 people have joined the <a href="#">billionaire ranks</a> since 2020, bringing the worldwide total to 2,668, according to an analysis released by Oxfam on Sunday. That means a new billionaire was minted about every 30 hours, on average, so far during the pandemic.</p> <p>The report, which draws on data compiled by Forbes, looks at the rise of inequality over the past two years. It is timed to coincide with the kickoff of the <a href="#">annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos</a>, Switzerland, a gathering of some of the wealthiest people and world leaders.</p> <p>Billionaires have seen their total <a href="#">net worth</a> soar by \$3.8 trillion, or 42%, to \$12.7 trillion during the pandemic. A large part of the increase has been fueled by strong gains in the stock markets, which was aided by governments injecting money into the global economy to soften the financial blow of the coronavirus.</p> <p>Much of the jump in wealth came in the first year of the pandemic. It then plateaued and has since dropped a bit, said Max Lawson, head of inequality policy at Oxfam.</p> <p>At the same time, Covid-19, growing inequality and <a href="#">rising food prices</a> could push as many as 263 million people into <a href="#">extreme poverty</a> this year, reversing decades of progress, Oxfam said in a report released last month.</p> <p>"I've never seen such a dramatic growth in poverty and growth in wealth at the same moment in history," Lawson said. "It's going to hurt a lot of people."</p> <p><b>Benefiting from high prices</b></p> <p>Consumers around the world are contending with the <a href="#">soaring cost of energy and food</a>, but corporations in these industries and their leaders are benefiting from the rise in prices, Oxfam said.</p> <p>Billionaires in the food and agribusiness sector have seen their total wealth increase by \$382 billion, or 45%, over the past two years, after adjusting for inflation. Some 62 food billionaires were created since 2020.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the net worth of their peers in the oil, gas and coal sectors jumped by \$53 billion, or 24%, since 2020, after adjusting for inflation.</p> <p>Forty new pandemic billionaires were created in the pharmaceutical industry, which has been at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19 and the beneficiary of billions in public funding.</p> <p>The <a href="#">tech sector</a> has spawned many billionaires, including seven of the 10 world's richest people, such as Tesla's Elon Musk, Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Microsoft's Bill Gates. These men increased their wealth by \$436 billion to \$934 billion over the past two years, after adjusting for inflation.</p> <p><b>Tax the rich</b></p> <p>To counter the meteoric growth in inequality and help those struggling with the rise in prices, Oxfam is pushing governments to tax the wealthy and corporations.</p>



	<p>It is calling for a temporary 90% tax on excess corporate profits, as well as a one-time tax on billionaires' wealth.</p> <p>The group would also like to levy a permanent wealth tax on the super-rich. It suggests a 2% tax on assets greater than \$5 million, rising to 5% for net worth above \$1 billion. This could raise \$2.5 trillion worldwide.</p> <p>Wealth taxes, however, have not been embraced by many governments. Efforts to levy taxes on the <a href="#">net worth of the richest Americans</a> have <a href="#">failed to advance in Congress</a> in recent years.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 SKorea: age of appeasing NKorea is over</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/23/asia/south-korea-president-exclusive-interview-intl-hnk/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/23/asia/south-korea-president-exclusive-interview-intl-hnk/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>Seoul (CNN)</b>The age of appeasing North Korea is over and any new talks between Seoul and Pyongyang must be initiated by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, South Korea's new conservative <a href="#">President Yoon Suk Yeol</a> said on Monday.</p> <p>Speaking exclusively to CNN in his first media interview since taking office two weeks ago, Yoon said: "I think the ball is in Chairman Kim's court -- it is his choice to start a dialogue with us."</p> <p>North Korea has launched 15 missile tests so far this year -- more than in the past two years combined -- and last month Kim vowed to <a href="#">"strengthen and develop" its nuclear forces at the "highest possible" speed.</a></p> <p>From his new presidential office at the former defense building in Seoul, Yoon told CNN South Korea and its allies stand ready for any acts of North Korean provocation.</p> <p>"Just to escape temporarily North Korean provocation or conflict is not something that we should do," he said, pointing at the previous liberal administration's conciliatory strategy. "This kind of approach over the past five years, has proven to be a failure."</p> <p>Yoon, a former prosecutor and newcomer to politics, has consistently emphasized his <a href="#">tougher stance on North Korea</a> and desire to strengthen the South's military -- a departure from predecessor Moon Jae-in, who had promoted dialogue and peaceful reconciliation.</p> <p>Despite his stance, Yoon said Monday he didn't want North Korea to "collapse."</p> <p>"What I want is shared and common prosperity on the Korean Peninsula," he said -- but added, "I do not believe that enhancing [North Korea's] nuclear capability is helpful and conducive to maintaining international peace."</p> <p>The US, China and the Quad</p> <p>Given North Korea's recent surge in missile testing and resumed activity at its underground nuclear test site, regional leaders were on edge over the weekend as Yoon met with <a href="#">US President Joe Biden</a> in Seoul.</p> <p>US officials had warned the North could be preparing for an underground nuclear or intercontinental ballistic missile test during Biden's visit -- <a href="#">his first Asia trip</a> since taking office.</p> <p>So far, that hasn't happened.</p> <p>But the two men found common ground, Yoon said, showing CNN a gift received from Biden, a sign that read, "The buck stops here." The quote is often associated with former US President Harry S. Truman. "I don't know how (Biden) knew that I like this statement," Yoon said, placing it in the middle of his desk.</p> <p>Throughout his campaign, Yoon emphasized the importance of South Korea's close security alliance with the US -- a push that was on full display after his meeting with Biden, when the US President praised their relationship as reaching "new heights."</p>

After their meeting, the two leaders [announced in a joint statement](#) they would begin discussions on restarting and potentially expanding joint military drills that had been halted under Biden's predecessor -- a step likely to draw fury from North Korea.

On Monday, Yoon defended the move as purely defensive. Regular military training is "the basic duty of every military around the world to maintain their readiness," he said.

He added that in the case of an attack, the US would provide assistance including missile defense and its "nuclear umbrella," the promise of protection from a nuclear-armed state to a non-nuclear ally.

However, he ruled out the possibility of "redeploying tactical nuclear weapons on the [Korean] Peninsula."

But South Korea could see its partnership with the US and other regional players expand in other ways.

Yoon said it was in South Korea's "national interest" to join Biden's [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#), a newly-unveiled economic plan for like-minded democracies in the region that is widely seen as a counter to China's sway.

He added that South Korea is also considering joining several working groups of the "Quad," or Quadilateral Security Dialogue -- an informal group made up of the US, Australia, India and Japan -- to collaborate in areas including vaccines, climate change and emerging technology. However, he stopped short of saying the South would seek official Quad membership, saying it was something they would "continue to consider."

The Quad has become more active in recent years as concerns grow about China's territorial claims in the region, with all four heads of state set to hold an [in-person summit in Tokyo](#) on Tuesday. [Beijing has condemned the bloc](#) as an anti-China "clique" emblematic of a "poisonous" Cold War mentality.

For years, South Korea has tried to balance its US alliance with growing economic ties with China -- but Seoul's relations with Beijing have become strained in recent years.

Throughout his campaign, Yoon took a cooler tone than his predecessor toward China, portraying the country as an economic rival.

When asked about the risk of provoking Beijing's fury by forging closer ties with the US, Yoon brushed off the threat of economic retaliation.

"Even if we strengthen our alliances with the United States in security and technology, it does not mean that we think our economic cooperation with China is unimportant," he said. Besides, he added, both South Korea and China depend on their mutual cooperation -- "so I do not believe it is reasonable for China to be overly sensitive about this matter."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Poland president surprise visit to Kyiv</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/polish-leader-returns-to-ukraine-backing-eu-bid-and-efforts-to-restart-exports-11653217429">https://www.wsj.com/articles/polish-leader-returns-to-ukraine-backing-eu-bid-and-efforts-to-restart-exports-11653217429</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—In a surprise visit to Kyiv on Sunday, Polish President Andrzej Duda said that only Ukraine should decide any terms upon which it pursues peace with Moscow, and he called for a complete removal of all Russian troops in Ukraine, breaking with European leaders who have suggested the partly-occupied country should accede to some of its attacker's demands.</p> <p>Mr. Duda, the first foreign leader to address Ukraine's parliament in person since <a href="#">Russia's Feb. 24 invasion</a>, also called for the European Union to increase sanctions on Russia and accept Ukraine as its newest member.</p>

In a speech interrupted repeatedly by standing applause, with Polish flags displayed across Kyiv's unicameral parliament, Mr. Duda said that Poland supported Ukraine's right to make its own choices in any discussions with Russia.

"There are disturbing voices appearing within Europe demanding that Ukraine should acknowledge the demands of Russia. I want to say clearly that only Ukraine has the right to decide about itself," he said. "Nothing should be decided about you, without you."

His comments come after some European leaders have proposed offering Russia enough concessions to allow President [Vladimir Putin](#) to save face and end the war. Italy said Friday it had presented [a four-point peace plan](#) to United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. The proposal would declare Ukraine a neutral country, grant autonomy to Ukraine's Crimea and Donbas, and wind down the sanctions on Russia, according to a report in Italian newspaper La Repubblica, whose points mostly mirrored comments made publicly by Prime Minister Mario Draghi and other Western European leaders.

Mr. Duda didn't name which countries were pressing Ukraine to accept Russia's demands. On Saturday, former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi called for Europe to "make a peace proposal to get the Ukrainians to accept Putin's demands," comments carried on Polish state television.

"The world and the international community should demand an end to Russia's aggression and a complete withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine," Mr. Duda said. "If for the sake of a bit of peace of economic interest or political ambition even a centimeter of Ukrainian soil and a piece of their sovereignty will be sacrificed, then this will be a huge blow not only for Ukraine, but also for the Western community."

He also called for the EU to go further in its efforts to cut itself off from the Russian economy. The bloc is close to approving a new package of sanctions that would include an embargo on Russian crude oil, though Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban is [standing in the way](#).

"I will not rest until Ukraine is a member of the European Union," Mr. Duda said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky, who also spoke before parliament, said that his country would introduce a special legal status for Poles residing in Ukraine, a reciprocal offer for Poland, which has taken in several million Ukrainians since the war began. An official in Mr. Duda's office said the two governments were interested in pursuing an agreement similar to the 1963 Élysée Treaty, in which France and West Germany agreed to meet regularly and coordinate their major policy decisions, a treaty that became a basis for closer European integration after World War II.

Mr. Duda's visit to Kyiv was his second since the war began. Mr. Duda—who told The Wall Street Journal [in an interview this month](#) that he speaks by phone nearly every day to Mr. Zelensky—is currently looking to help Ukraine [move its grain](#) to international markets, circumventing Russia's naval chokehold in the Black Sea. Next month, Mr. Duda is traveling to Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, to help coordinate those shipments.

Mr. Duda met with Mr. Zelensky to discuss how to get Ukraine's grain harvest out of the country via ports and rail lines in Poland and its neighbors.

Warehouses in Ukraine are filled with wheat and other grain that the country, one of the world's largest exporters, has been unable to ship since February. Ukraine also relies on shipments from and through Poland to alleviate the crippling fuel shortage that was caused by Russia striking Ukraine's oil refineries and fuel-storage facilities.

Ukrainian leaders say the country needs a massive increase in weapons supplies to continue resisting Russia, to liberate occupied territories and to try to unblock shipping lanes.

Mr. Zelensky said in his late-night address that he is preparing for a week of [maximum diplomatic activity](#) as Ukraine looks for ways to increase the volume of its agricultural exports and fuel imports. He will give a virtual speech on Monday to the World Economic Forum being held in Davos.

President Biden on Saturday signed a \$40 billion bill that includes an additional \$6 billion in direct military aid and \$8.8 billion in economic assistance to Ukraine. The Biden administration hasn't specified what weapons it plans to supply with these new funds, and hasn't indicated whether it will accept Ukrainian requests for long-range artillery and missile systems such as the Himars multiple-launch rocket system that Kyiv says it needs most urgently.

Ukrainian resistance forced Mr. Putin in late March to abandon plans to seize Kyiv, precipitating a Russian withdrawal from northern Ukraine. In this new phase of the war, Russia's declared objective was to capture the entirety of the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions, collectively known as Donbas. Mr. Putin in February recognized the independence of the Russian-controlled statelets, known as the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, and no longer considers Donbas part of Ukraine.

In addition to about three-quarters of Donbas, Russia currently controls parts of the Kharkiv region, where its forces are retreating under Ukrainian counterattacks, and a swath of southern Ukraine's Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. Signs of Ukrainian resistance are growing in these occupied areas, where Russia has replaced local administrations with collaborators and is introducing its ruble as the currency instead of the Ukrainian hryvnia.

In Enerhodar, a city in the Zaporizhzhia region that is home to Europe's largest nuclear power plant, unknown assailants Sunday placed an explosive device at the residence of the Russian-appointed mayor, Andriy Shevchyk, according to Russian and Ukrainian reports. Enerhodar's legitimately elected mayor, Dmytro Orlov, said in a social-media post that Mr. Shevchyk and his bodyguards were injured and hospitalized.

Russia's broader effort to capture the entirety of Donbas has stalled after more than a month of fighting. Moscow's current offensive focuses on a much narrower salient that includes Severodonetsk, the administrative center of Ukrainian-controlled Luhansk region, and nearby towns. Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Saturday that Russia is close to completing the "liberation" of the Luhansk region.

Russia's initial effort to cut the only road connecting Severodonetsk to the rest of government-controlled Donbas failed two weeks ago, after Ukrainian forces destroyed Russian pontoon bridging attempts. Russia lost some 90 tanks and other armored vehicles in that attempt, according to drone footage, and has acknowledged the death of its 12th Engineers Brigade commander, among other casualties.

Russian forces were more successful in recent days as they moved toward the road from the south, developing an offensive from the town of Popasna, which Moscow seized early this month. On Saturday, a Russian Tulpan self-propelled heavy mortar destroyed the main bridge connecting Severodonetsk to government-controlled areas, making the defense of the embattled city even more difficult.

Russian TV filmed the Tulpan, a relatively rare vehicle, firing 220 mm rounds from the town of Rubizhne near Severodonetsk. Ukrainian forces geolocated the position from the footage and destroyed the vehicle hours later, said Ukraine's Luhansk administration chief, Serhiy Haidai. Open-source intelligence analysts located drone footage of the strike on the Tulpan to within 200 meters of the footage broadcast on Russian TV.

Russia said it had taken complete control of the southeastern port city of Mariupol on Saturday after the surrender of the last remaining Ukrainian forces there. Mr. Zelensky described the soldiers and marines who had defended Mariupol through a monthslong siege as national heroes. He said the military had told them to get out and save their lives.

	<p>Russia’s Defense Ministry said a final group of 531 Ukrainian fighters had been evacuated from bunkers under the sprawling Azovstal steel plant to Russian-controlled territory, bringing the total number of prisoners taken from the plant to 2,439.</p> <p>“The underground facilities of the enterprise, where the militants were hiding, came under the full control of the Russian armed forces,” the ministry said.</p> <p>By holding out for weeks in ever-smaller pockets, Ukrainian defenders tied up large numbers of Russian troops, preventing their deployment elsewhere.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 SPD reliance ‘mob psychology’ debunked</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3481039/report-on-2020-protests-recommends-new-training-for-spd-debunks-mob-psychology/">https://mynorthwest.com/3481039/report-on-2020-protests-recommends-new-training-for-spd-debunks-mob-psychology/</a>
GIST	<p>While SPD’s operational approach to the 2020 protests was underpinned by contemporary science, it also drew on the flawed and outdated theory of “mob psychology” to understand the crowd dynamics leading to underutilization of de-escalation through dialogue and over-reliance on indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, according to a <a href="#">new report</a> on crowd psychology examining the SPD response to the early days of the protests over the murder of George Floyd.</p> <p>“This serves to formally debunk that notion of crowd contagion or mob psychology, where there was a belief that if you have these four or five bad actors, they will contaminate the rest of the crowd, and the crowd then becomes this angry mob that’s a monolith. The science just is showing that that’s not necessarily true, that you need to use differentiation and deal with the bad actors. But let the other folks who are there continue to exercise their First Amendment rights,” said Seattle Inspector General Lisa Judge, who commissioned the report on the first four days of the protests to build on the ongoing Sentinel Review her office is conducting on SPD’s protest response.</p> <p>The study suggests that SPD became locked in a cycle of escalation over the first four days of the protests — May 29 through June 2 — leaving few options other than the deployment of public order resources ready to use force when SPD deemed it necessary and lawfully justified.</p> <p>“This report really highlights the inextricable relationship with how police actions are interpreted by crowds as being either legitimate or illegitimate and the impact that really has on the ability to de-escalate or whether the crowd gets escalated by the actions of police,” explained Judge.</p> <p>Judge says the importance of this is really building an understanding and confirming how the legitimacy or illegitimacy of your actions as a police officer out there can really impact crowd dynamics.</p> <p>“I think it’s a critical piece of understanding what really works to deescalate a large group of protesters and what can serve to instead escalate them without intending to,” she added.</p> <p>Bottom line – just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.</p> <p>“The law says officers can take certain actions, their policies support that. But is that really being viewed as legitimate in the eyes of community? It’s that gap there that if people see officers doing things that they don’t view as a legitimate restriction on them, that’s what turns the crowd,” explained Judge. “And that’s what turns individuals in the crowd into people who are far more angry, and wanting to take other measures other than just peacefully exercising first amendment rights, because they feel like their rights are now being infringed, wrongfully.”</p> <p>The OIG is working with SPD to ensure this is built into their philosophy on crowd management.</p> <p>“I think the shift really should be away from crowd management and control to crowd facilitation. And crowd safety,” said Judge.</p>

The report found that SPD crowd management policy and training currently places facilitation of First Amendment rights as a primary strategic goal, but that's caveated against the police duty to protect public safety and prevent crime.

The objective tension between the competing goals leaves SPD reliant on a "meet and greet" approach carried out mostly by bicycle units.

Instead, the report says the SPD needs to increase its capacity to manage crowd events by communicating with those in the crowd, something there was little to no examples of during the early days of the 2020 protests.

Seattle Police Chief Adrian Diaz says that's the idea behind SPD's Public Order Engagement Team – or POET. POET is a newly created, specially trained unit that includes traditional officers as well as unarmed Community Service Officers (CSO) where they are on the front end trying to start a dialogue with organizers of a protest or event and build relationships to ensure an open line of communication should a situation arise.

"We want to make sure that we don't have to use officers to be standing in line, and we don't want to use officers to be in that level of confrontation. So how can we do it on the front end, be more preventative, and build those relationships," Diaz explained.

Chief Diaz says it worked well in the recent *Roe v. Wade* protests the city experienced, including one where a preacher showed up.

"He's spouting this stuff that it becomes very emotionally charged," explained Diaz. "He then gets assaulted by the group and we're trying to mitigate that because, number one, we're trying to make sure that both have an opportunity for their level of free speech and that we're trying to make sure that we quell issues that are going on, and then developing those relationships."

In another *Roe v. Wade* event, Diaz says that relationship building paid off for officers.

"One of the first deployments during the *Roe v. Wade* events, is officers actually spent a lot of time during the whole event with the groups. And at the end of the day, they started offering officers water, and that's because they built that connection and built that relationship," said Diaz.

Without those relationships, there can be misunderstandings, wrong assumptions, and over-response.

"That is so important for us to be able to establish who we are, we want to show that we're not an occupying force and that we are working with the community," explained Diaz. "And we have those same sometimes similar interest in whatever that people might be protesting or advocating for, and our officers probably have the same feelings of supporting that."

Another step SPD is taking is the launch of a new pre-academy training for new recruits called Before the Badge.

"Bringing recruits in 45 days prior to the academy, and really instilling social, emotional learning and brain development, in giving them the skills to be able to have their focus on their own wellness, and be able to create listening sessions and opportunities to have a dialogue with communities that have had a level of mistrust," said Diaz.

"Those listening sessions and opportunities to just have those conversations will translate into a situation where they can be used in a POET situation because they've had those difficult conversations prior to ever being involved in some sort of protest or situation," he added.

"When you talk about tactics and law, that's like two legs that you're kind of teetering through your career on," Seattle Police Officer Kim Bogucki recently told KIRO 7 TV's Linzi Sheldon. "If you add wellness



and you add community relations, now you have a real stable, you have four legs to go through your career on.”

She says a big part of this training will be learning individual communities’ histories and nuances.

“So the way that you interact with the LGBTQIA community, even understanding what that is,” she said. “The East-African community, the different factions within that community as a female, maybe I don’t want to put my hands on a Muslim person if I have a male officer right here because it’s a sign of disrespect. So how do we teach some of these little cultural nuances that maybe none of us grew up around?”

Bogucki says mental health and having a way to reset is critical to new recruits and longtime officers, and Chief Diaz agrees.

“A healthy officer will create healthy outcomes,” said Diaz.

Diaz has been shifting things in this direction for existing officers and dealing with how those officers might feel about all the change.

“That doesn’t mean that everybody’s like, yes, the chief said this and so I’m 100% on board, but it is a shift that people are embracing. They say, look, we have to make sure that we are doing everything we can to de-escalate, that we’re taking all of our mindful acts of trying to make sure that we’re compassionate, empathetic, and we’re approaching situations in giving people different potential options to have a safe resolve to it. So I’m encouraged to see all the hard work that our officers have done. But you know, there’s more to come,” he said.

“This is all just part of how our department wants to operate.”

“For me as chief, I am really focused on trying to build a level of compassion and empathy in the department,” said Diaz.

Inspector General Lisa Judge says much of this philosophy has worked well in the U.K. and Sweden, and she hopes other U.S. law enforcement agencies pay attention to what happens here in Seattle.

“I think this may serve as some foundational stuff for other police departments around the world to build an understanding of how you relate with the crowd, what really can be impactful in terms of de-escalating crowds, really the critical piece of communication as a de-escalation tool,” she said.

Both Diaz and Judge stressed what a great example this work has been of collaboration between OIG and SPD.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 India, Bangladesh floods displaces millions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/asia/flooding-india-bangladesh.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/asia/flooding-india-bangladesh.html</a>
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI — Heavy pre-monsoon rains in India and Bangladesh have washed away train stations, towns and villages, leaving millions of people homeless as extreme weather events, including heat waves, intense rainfall and floods, become more common in South Asia.</p> <p>More than 60 people have been killed in days of flooding, landslides and thunderstorms that have left many people without food and drinking water and have isolated them by cutting off the internet, according to officials.</p> <p>The devastation in India’s northeast, one of the worst affected regions, has submerged railway tracks, bridges and roads. In the remote state of Assam, 31 of its 33 districts have been affected by floods,</p>

impacting the lives of more than 700,000 people, officials said on Saturday. At least 18 people have already died in the state because of floods and landslides, according to news reports.

At least 33 people were killed in the neighboring state of Bihar by lightning strikes and heavy rain in its 16 districts, Nitish Kumar, the chief minister, said on Friday.

Climate scientists have said that India and Bangladesh are particularly vulnerable to climate change because of their proximity to the warm tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, which are [increasingly experiencing heat waves](#). The rising sea temperatures have led to “dry conditions” in some parts of the Indian subcontinent and “a significant increase in rainfall” in other areas, according to [a study](#) published in January by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune.

On Sunday, India’s meteorological department warned of “thunderstorms with lightning and very heavy rainfall” in many parts of the country’s remote northeast where the Brahmaputra, one of the world’s largest rivers, has inundated vast areas of agricultural land, villages and towns over the past couple of weeks.

The floodwaters of the Brahmaputra and other rivers have arrived with fury in Bangladesh, a low-lying nation of about 170 million people, where extreme rainfall and landslides [washed away a sprawling Rohingya refugee camp overnight last year](#). In 2020, torrential rains [submerged at least a quarter of the country](#).

About two million people have been affected in the Sylhet region, in the country’s east, in what officials describe as one of the worst floods in many years.

“We haven’t seen such a widespread flood in Sylhet for around two decades,” S.M. Shahidul Islam, a chief engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board, said on Sunday.

“Heavy rainfall and increased flow of floodwater through the Surma River is the main reason for this situation,” said Mr. Islam, explaining that dams in the area are unable to hold the floodwaters that have started pouring into cities.

At least 10 people have been killed in the region, most drowning after their boats capsized while they were trying to move to safer areas, officials said on Sunday. “We still are working to see if there are more casualties,” said Mosharraf Hossain, the top official in the Sylhet region.

Roads cut off by floods have made relief efforts challenging, officials say. But the devastation has left millions of people with nothing.

“The flood situation is terrible in our village in Zakiganj,” said Mahmudul Hasan, 29, who was taking shelter with six family members in Sylhet.

The family has not received any food or water, said Mr. Hasan. And he said he was constantly worried about his home. “Our house is made of mud,” he explained.

The government of Bangladesh has closed nearly 600 schools and colleges indefinitely to use them as shelters for those who have nowhere to go. At least 3,000 hectares of rice paddy fields have been consumed by the flooding, which is expected to affect the livelihoods of thousands of farmers, officials said.

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HEADLINE	05/22 Severe thunderstorms lash parts of Canada
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/canada/ottawa-storms.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/canada/ottawa-storms.html</a>

**GIST**

In a grim start to a long weekend in Canada, at least six people were killed and hundreds of thousands of customers remained without power after a line of thunderstorms cut a violent path across parts of Quebec and Ontario on Saturday, [according to Environment Canada](#).

The storm — with wind gusts surpassing 80 miles per hour — uprooted trees and damaged power lines and structures across southern and central Quebec and southern Ontario, Environment Canada, the government's weather service, said.

On Sunday, a day before Canadians were to celebrate Victoria Day, scattered [tree limbs still blocked roads](#) and [animals were trapped](#) by pieces of splintered barns. Utility companies rushed to restore power for customers, some of whom had been in the dark for more than 12 hours.

The storm was a derecho, a line of severe thunderstorms that produce high winds and can spawn tornadoes, said David Sills, the executive director of the Northern Tornadoes Project at Western University, in Ontario.

That kind of severe weather, which feeds off instability in the atmosphere, is rare in Canada, occurring once perhaps every five or 10 years, he said. But one cutting through heavily populated areas that causes so many deaths is even more unusual, he added.

"It just got stronger and stronger," Mr. Sills said. "By the time it got about an hour west of Toronto, there was a gust of wind of 132 kilometers per hour," or about 82 miles per hour.

Most of the fatalities were the result of people being hit by falling trees, the police said.

This included a [woman in Brampton, Ontario](#), just west of Toronto, as she walked outside; a person who died [when a tree fell](#) on a camping trailer that was parked at Pinehurst Lake; a [59-year-old man](#) at a golf course; a 30-year-old man in the Ganaraska Forest, east of Toronto; and [a 44-year-old man](#) in Greater Madawaska, in eastern Ontario.

In Quebec, a 51-year-old woman died after her boat capsized and she fell into the Ottawa River in Gatineau, just north of Ottawa, the police said.

Mr. Sills said the deaths from falling trees likely stemmed from the nature of the storm, which was moving at more than 60 m.p.h., and that Canadians were outside enjoying the long weekend.

"People didn't have a chance to take cover if they didn't have a warning," he said. "This came upon them very quickly with very little time to react."

Widespread power outages continued into Sunday evening, with about 226,000 customers, mostly in Ontario, still without electricity. Hydro One, a power company servicing Ontario, said that its transmission system in the Ottawa area had incurred substantial damage.

"We anticipate it will take several days to restore power after today's destructive storm," the company [said on Twitter](#) on Saturday evening, referring customers to its [outage map for further updates](#).

Jim Watson, the mayor of Ottawa, said in a [statement on Saturday](#) that the city had deployed "city and hydro crews" to restore power and clear roads.

"This was a massive storm and we ask for your patience," Mr. Watson added.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Rare northern Michigan tornado kills 2
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/21/us/gaylord-michigan-tornado.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/21/us/gaylord-michigan-tornado.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article</a>

GAYLORD, Mich. — A tornado that killed at least two people and injured dozens of others dropped out of the sky in far northern Michigan on Friday and onto a mobile home park before tearing a three-block hole through the small city of Gaylord.

“It all just flashed before my eyes,” said Logan Clayton, 18, who was at home in the Nottingham Forest mobile home park, where the deaths were reported, when the winds became so intense that one window shattered. He recalled seeing “someone getting picked up, trailers getting picked up. It all just happened within 10 seconds and then it was gone.”

As cleanup began on Saturday, and as more than 40 people were treated for injuries, officials struggled to make sense of the damage in a region where tornadoes are rare. One person remained unaccounted for, and crews were searching through wreckage from the EF-3 tornado, which the National Weather Service said had maximum winds of 140 miles per hour.

“We were calling them out by name, trying to see if they were still in their damaged homes,” said Chief Frank Claeys of the Gaylord Police Department. “And when you see that, it’s a lot more personal when our officers know the names of people who live in those homes.”

Forecasters had warned of the potential for severe weather on Friday, but the tornado that hit Gaylord, population 4,300, still came suddenly. A severe thunderstorm warning issued in the afternoon was quickly upgraded to a tornado warning. The city, roughly 230 miles northwest of Detroit, has no tornado sirens, officials said, but people in the area were alerted to the storm by emergency notifications on their cellphones.

Within minutes, a tornado was on the ground, tearing apart the mobile homes and then charging across city limits from west to east. Cars were tossed on top of one another in a Hobby Lobby parking lot. A truck was upended next to a sign for a Culver’s restaurant. The roofs of several businesses had collapsed.

“This storm went a lot of places and did a lot of damages — hit a lot of homes, the commercial corridor,” said Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, a Democrat who visited Gaylord on Saturday.

Mr. Clayton said he had heard about the coming storm only because of a call from his older brother, Declan, who was at a Meijer gas station just down the street and saw swirling winds and circling birds in the sky. By the time the elder Mr. Clayton made it back to the mobile home park, debris was blocking the roads into the complex.

“I had to run a block down to our trailer, hopping over trees and rubble, helping people where I could,” said Declan Clayton, 20. “Because there was people crawling out of rubble with injuries. There were people confused. They didn’t know what happened.”

More than 40 people were treated at hospitals for their injuries, and officials said it was possible that others were hurt but had not sought medical attention. So many people needed care that patients were diverted to other hospitals in the region as one in Gaylord filled up.

On Saturday, strip mall parking lots in parts of Gaylord remained fields of debris. A Goodwill store was missing part of its front wall. Smashed bricks and shattered plywood were strewn outside the entrance of a Tropical Smoothie Cafe.

Athena and Steve Sherbert, who were dropping off their daughter for a shift at the smoothie cafe when the storm hit, ended up riding out the tornado in the restaurant’s cooler.

“Right when we were running back to the cooler, that’s when the windows shattered,” said Mr. Sherbert. “I could feel the glass hit the back of my legs.”

	<p>Tornadoes are far less common in Michigan than in many other Midwestern states. John Boris, of the National Weather Service office in Gaylord, said the state averaged about 15 tornadoes a year. Most of those occur well to the south of Gaylord, which is about 60 miles from the northern tip of the state's Lower Peninsula.</p> <p>"Up here, stuff like this doesn't happen," said Joshua Comoford, 22, who was handing out drinks to firefighters and volunteers on Saturday at the mobile home park. "You have rainstorms or severe winds. But a tornado actually ripping through our town? Nothing like that's ever happened in my lifetime."</p> <p>Lt. Derrick Carroll, a spokesman for the Michigan State Police, said power outages continued in parts of Gaylord on Saturday and a curfew would remain in place that night. Both people known to have died were in their 70s, he said. One of them was found overnight Friday during a search of the mobile home park with a cadaver dog. Crews continued to look on Saturday for a person who was reported missing.</p> <p>For those like Jasmine Vandebrook, whose mobile home was smothered by other trailers and destroyed, the challenge was how to move forward now. Ms. Vandebrook, 31, who shared the home with five family members, said she had no renters' insurance. They had only been able to salvage a few items.</p> <p>"It's very hard seeing that you have nothing," said Ms. Vandebrook, who picked up some donated supplies — blankets, clothes, food — at a local church. "All your belongings, everything just ripped out of your house."</p> <p>Her family is now living in a friend's camper until they can find a place to rent.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 What is known about long Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/21/well/long-covid-symptoms-treatment.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/21/well/long-covid-symptoms-treatment.html</a>
GIST	<p>Among the many confounding aspects of the coronavirus is the spectrum of possible <a href="#">symptoms</a>, as well as their severity and duration. Some people develop mild illness and recover quickly, with no lasting effects. But studies estimate that <a href="#">10 to 30 percent</a> of people report persistent or new medical issues months after their initial coronavirus infections — a constellation of symptoms known as long Covid. People who experience mild or moderate illness, as well as those without any underlying medical conditions, <a href="#">can nonetheless experience some debilitating long-term symptoms</a>, including fatigue, shortness of breath, an erratic heart rate, headaches, dizziness, depression and problems with memory and concentration.</p> <p>Such lingering medical issues are so varied that one study by a patient-led research group evaluated <a href="#">203 symptoms</a> that may fluctuate or even appear out of the blue after people seem to have recovered.</p> <p>As Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, the chief of research and development at the VA St. Louis Healthcare System and a clinical epidemiologist at Washington University in St. Louis, said, "If you've seen one patient with long Covid, you've seen one patient with long Covid."</p> <p><b>How doctors currently diagnose long Covid</b></p> <p>There is little consensus on the exact definition of long Covid, also known by the medical term <a href="#">PASC</a>, or post-acute sequelae of Covid-19. While the World Health Organization says long Covid starts <a href="#">three months</a> after the original bout of illness or positive test result, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sets the timeline at just after <a href="#">one month</a>.</p> <p>Some researchers and health care providers use other time frames, making efforts to study and quantify the condition more difficult, said Dr. Al-Aly, who has conducted <a href="#">many studies</a> on long-term post-Covid issues.</p> <p>When patients experiencing persistent symptoms go to their doctors, tests like electrocardiograms, chest X-rays, CT scans and blood work don't always identify physiological problems, Dr. Al-Aly said.</p>

Researchers are working to pinpoint certain biological factors, called biomarkers, that correlate with persistent Covid symptoms. These could include signs of inflammation or certain [molecules produced by the immune system](#) that might be measured by blood tests, for example.

For now, doctors must rely on their patients' descriptions of symptoms and rule out alternative explanations or causes. Some post-Covid clinics have multidisciplinary teams of specialists evaluate patients to figure out the best treatment options.

### **What causes long Covid?**

It's unclear what exactly drives long Covid, but research has begun to offer some clues. Some experts theorize that an immune response that goes into overdrive when you first get sick may lead to inflammation and damage throughout the body, eventually resulting in long Covid symptoms, said Dr. Michael Peluso, an infectious disease physician at the University of California, San Francisco.

"We know that during acute Covid-19, some people have a really revved-up immune response and some people have a reduced immune response, and that response can determine the trajectory of how well somebody does," he said.

Another explanation, experts say, could be that your immune system never fully shuts down after the initial infection.

### **Who is at risk?**

Research offers some hints about which patients might face a greater risk of long-term symptoms. In a [study of 209 patients published in January](#), researchers found four factors that could be identified early in a person's coronavirus infection that appeared to correlate with an increased risk of having ongoing symptoms two to three months later.

One factor was the level of coronavirus RNA in the blood early in the infection, an indicator of viral load. Another was the presence of autoantibodies — antibodies that mistakenly attack tissues in the body as they do in conditions like lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. A third factor was the reactivation of Epstein-Barr virus, which can cause mononucleosis and infects most people, often when they are young, and then usually becomes dormant.

The fourth factor was having Type 2 diabetes, although experts say that in studies involving larger numbers of patients, diabetes might be only one of several medical conditions that increase the risk of long Covid.

Studies from post-Covid clinics have also found other pre-existing medical conditions that may put people at risk for long Covid. In a report on the [first 100 patients](#) treated for neurological and cognitive symptoms at a post-Covid clinic at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, 42 percent reported previously having depression or anxiety, though such patients might simply be more comfortable seeking neurological treatment, doctors said. Other pre-existing conditions included autoimmune diseases and headaches.

Studies also suggest that the risk of developing long Covid peaks in middle age, Dr. Peluso said. The average age of patients in the Northwestern study was 43. An analysis of [78,252 private health insurance claims](#) across the United States found that people between the ages of 36 and 64 made up about two-thirds of the long Covid patients. (But that study did not include most Medicare recipients, so it involved relatively few older patients.)

[Women may be disproportionately affected](#), with some studies finding that about 60 percent of patients are female. A similar pattern has emerged in other long-term conditions like ME/CFS (myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome), which has several symptoms similar to those of long Covid.



Because the pandemic has had a significant impact on [Black and Latino communities in the United States](#), and those groups have more limited access to medical care, they may have high numbers of long Covid cases as well, Dr. Peluso said.

### **Can vaccines protect against long Covid?**

The picture is still coming into focus, but several [studies suggest](#) that getting a Covid vaccine can reduce — but not eliminate — the risk of longer-term symptoms.

The United Kingdom's Health Security Agency conducted an [analysis](#) of eight studies that had looked at vaccines and long Covid before mid-January. Six found that vaccinated people who then became infected with the coronavirus were less likely than unvaccinated patients to develop symptoms of long Covid. The remaining two studies found that vaccination did not appear to conclusively reduce the chances of developing long Covid.

In that analysis, one [study](#), which has not been peer-reviewed, of about 240,000 U.S. patients found that those who had received even one dose of a Covid vaccine before their infections were seven to 10 times less likely than unvaccinated patients to report symptoms of long Covid 12 to 20 weeks later. But another [large study](#) of electronic patient records at the U.S. Veterans Health Administration, also not yet peer reviewed, found that those who were vaccinated had only a 13 percent lower risk than unvaccinated patients of having symptoms six months later. Vaccinated patients mostly benefited by being less likely to develop lung problems and blood-clotting difficulties, said Dr. Al-Aly, one of the study's authors.

“Reliance on vaccination as a sole mitigation strategy is wholly inadequate,” Dr. Al-Aly said. “It is like going to battle with a shield that only partially works.”

### **Seeking medical care**

If you are concerned about any lingering symptoms after a confirmed or suspected coronavirus infection, don't be afraid to ask for help. Checking in with your primary care provider is a good first step. More doctors are becoming aware of long Covid symptoms and can recommend tests that might at least rule out other causes of your symptoms.

“Even though we say that long Covid is when symptoms last for a month or three months after infection, you don't have to wait that long to get help,” Dr. Al-Aly said. “People should really honor their symptoms.”

If you're not getting help from a primary care doctor, you may want to seek out a post-Covid clinic, though Dr. Al-Aly acknowledged that “it's easier said than done.” Access to post-Covid clinics can be difficult for those without adequate medical insurance. And, in some states, people may have to travel hundreds of miles to get to the nearest one. You can look up [post-Covid clinics near you on the Survivor Corps database](#).

Bring your medical records if you're visiting a new provider and make a list of all your symptoms, especially if you're experiencing cognitive issues and are likely to forget some health concerns when your appointment comes around.

Some long Covid issues can be managed with existing medications or treatments for symptoms like headaches or gastrointestinal problems. Physical therapy and “[cognitive rehab](#),” including approaches often used for patients who have experienced strokes or brain injuries, can also be helpful over time. Some people benefit from tailored [physical and mental health rehabilitation services](#) and breathing exercises, which can help them slowly build back strength and endurance for physical activities.

Other possible tools against long Covid, including antiviral treatments, are only beginning to be studied. The National Institutes of Health is devoting more than \$1 billion to a major research effort called the [Recover Initiative](#), but progress has been slow so far. Lawmakers are [pushing for better funding](#) for long Covid research and medical care.

	<p>Several groups, such as <a href="#">Body Politic</a>, <a href="#">Long Covid Alliance</a> and <a href="#">Survivor Corps</a>, provide emotional support, as well as resources for seeking treatment, disability benefits and patient advocacy.</p> <p>People with long Covid may also want to consider joining a research trial, Dr. Peluso said. You may be able to find continuing clinical studies at universities and academic centers near you, or sign up to be part of the Recover Initiative.</p> <p>“Participating in research can be very empowering,” Dr. Peluso said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Israel biggest eviction Palestinians in years</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/22/israel-palestinian-masafer-yatta-biden/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/22/israel-palestinian-masafer-yatta-biden/</a>
GIST	<p>AL-MARKAZ VILLAGE, West Bank — The Najjar family knew what to expect on the morning of May 11 when a neighbor called: “The bulldozer is coming.” For the second time in five months, the Israeli military had come to knock down their house.</p> <p>But this time there was reason to fear that the house would be gone for good. After decades of demolition, rebuilding and a more than 20-year legal battle, Israel’s highest court this month gave the military permission to permanently evict more than 1,000 Palestinians here and repurpose the land for an army firing range.</p> <p>Less than a week after the high court ruling, the Najjars’ house was demolished, marking the start of what activists say will probably be the biggest mass expulsion of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since the 1967 war, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were driven from territories captured by Israel.</p> <p>The court was unswayed by historical documents presented by advocates for the Palestinians, showing what they said was evidence that the proposal to establish a firing range, decades ago, was meant to prevent Palestinians from claiming the land.</p> <p>“We had 30 minutes to get out what we could,” said Yusara al-Najjar, who was born in a hand-hewn cave on this same slope in the Negev desert 60 years ago. She looked over the pile of broken blocks and twisted metal that had been her family home and wiped her hands with a slap. “It took no time and our house was gone, again.”</p> <p>The demolitions have sparked expressions of concern from Washington ahead of a planned June visit to Israel by President Biden, coming at a time of mounting instability in Israel’s coalition government and the recent approval of more than 4,200 new housing units in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price, responding to a question about the high court ruling, beseeched both Israelis and Palestinians to avoid steps that raise tensions. “This certainly includes evictions,” he said.</p> <p>The European Union urged Israel to halt the demolitions. A United Nations human rights panel warned that the “forcible transfer” of residents would amount to “a serious breach of international and humanitarian and human rights laws.”</p> <p>The Israel Defense Forces said in a statement that the demolitions were in accordance with the high court’s years-long review and its unanimous ruling on behalf of the military.</p> <p>“The Supreme Court fully accepted the State Of Israel’s position, and ruled that the petitioners were not permanent residents of the area,” the statement said. “The court also noted that the petitioners rejected any attempted compromise offered to them.”</p> <p>The tug of war for these dry rolling hills south of the biblical city of Hebron began in the 1980s, when Israeli officials laid claim to several areas of the West Bank for the stated reason of creating military training grounds.</p>

This region of 8,000 to 14,000 acres — known in Arabic as Masafer Yatta and in English as the South Hebron Hills — was designated as Firing Zone 918.

“The vital importance of this firing zone to the Israel Defense Forces stems from the unique topographical character of the area, which allows for training methods specific to both small and large frameworks, from a squad to a battalion,” the military said in court documents reported by the Times of Israel.

But human rights activists, both Palestinian and Israeli, contend that the real purpose of many of the firing zones has been to clear away Arab residents and strengthen Israel’s grip on more occupied Palestinian territory. Often, the designation has made way for expanding Israeli settlements, which are considered illegal by most of the international community.

Archived minutes from a 1981 meeting recently found by researchers on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seemed to support that idea. Then-agriculture minister — later prime minister — Ariel Sharon is recorded saying it was important to slow the “expansion of Arab villagers from the hills,” according to a story in Israel’s Haaretz newspaper on the document. “We have an interest in expanding and enlarging the shooting zones there, to keep these areas, which are so vital, in our hands.”

The document was entered as legal evidence.

Israeli officials argued that the residents of eight to 12 small hamlets in Zone 918 — most of them tent-dwelling herders who still wintered in caves dug from the limestone — could not show legal ownership of the land.

What followed was a legal Catch-22. Residents and their advocates repeatedly applied for permits to build houses and string power lines. Military officials, saying no one was allowed to live inside a firing range, denied the applications and then regularly dispatched armed demolition squads to knock down the “illegal” structures.

Officials issued the first eviction orders in 1999 but have since refrained from physically removing families as the legal challenges dragged on. Instead, according to advocates, the repetitive demolitions amount to strategic harassment meant drive the families away.

“I don’t think we’ll see pictures of people being put on trucks, because of the optics,” said Dror Sadot of B’Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization that has worked on the case. “What we’ll see will just be more repeated demolitions, which will force the community to leave because they can’t live there anymore.”

Over the years, the court has entertained compromises, including one that would allow evicted Palestinians to return to the fields on Jewish holidays and other periods when no military training was likely to take place. Residents rejected those proposals out of hand.

The high court finally brought an end to the challenge on May 5, ruling unanimously for the military and finding that the Palestinian families had failed to prove they had a legal claim to the land or had lived there before it was designated as a firing range.

“There is the law that works for the Jews, but for us it is nonexistent,” said Nidal Younes, head of the Masafer Yatta village council, who noted that a nearby outpost maintained by Israeli settlers is not subject to evictions under the order.

In her village, Najjar shakes her head at the idea that she is a newcomer to the land where she says her grandparents dug a limestone herder’s shelter in the 1950s and where she was born in 1961.

Now she and her family have been forced back into that cave, which, like many families, they have maintained over the years as a kitchen and extra living space. As the number of Israeli settlers in the area

	<p>grew, and with them incidents of settler vandalism and physical attacks, they saw it as a refuge from violence.</p> <p>The simple houses of block and metal roofing they built have all been demolished.</p> <p>Tending to a batch of traditional labneh cheese under solar-powered lights, Najjar described the most recent unannounced appearance of the bulldozer, escorted by more than a dozen soldiers with automatic weapons.</p> <p>“They didn’t say why they were here, they gave us no papers,” she said. “But we knew.”</p> <p>The soldiers instructed the men of the family to stay well away from the house as the women raced to grab clothes and bedding. They struggled with a washing machine. Many of their belongings were still inside when the soldiers told them to stand back.</p> <p>It took less than two hours for the bulldozer to level two houses and two sheep pens in the village of seven families, Najjar said. In all, the army demolished 20 structures in three villages that day, according to Basel Adra, a Palestinian activist who documents IDF activity in the area.</p> <p>The IDF has not said when it plans to carry out more demolition orders.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 Day 89 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-89-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-89-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ukraine has said it will not agree to any ceasefire deal that would involve handing over territory to Russia</b>, as Moscow intensified its attack in the eastern Donbas region. “The war must end with the complete restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty,” said Ukraine’s presidential chief of staff, Andriy Yermak.</li> <li>• The comments came as <b>Russia said it was willing to resume peace negotiations</b> – but its lead negotiator also said on Sunday that the initiative to continue them was with Kyiv. Kremlin aide <b>Vladimir Medinsky</b> claimed in an interview with Belarusian TV that “Russia has never refused talks”.</li> <li>• <b>Polish president Andrzej Duda became the first foreign leader to address the Ukrainian parliament in person</b> since the invasion began, backing Ukraine’s stance on territorial concessions and warning the international community that ceding any territory to Russia would be a “huge blow” to the entire west.</li> <li>• <b>Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said 50 to 100 Ukrainians were dying every day on the war’s eastern front</b> in what appeared to be a reference to military casualties. The heaviest fighting is focused around the twin cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk in Luhansk, one of the two regions that make up the Donbas. Serhiy Gaidai, the governor of Luhansk, said in a local television interview that Russia was using “scorched-earth” tactics in the region.</li> <li>• <b>Russia’s death toll from its war on Ukraine is akin to the losses suffered in its war in Afghanistan, the UK MoD has said.</b> In the first three months since Russia invaded <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, it has likely suffered a similar death toll to that experienced by the Soviet Union during its nine year war in Afghanistan, the UK ministry of defence claimed. A combination of “poor low-level tactics, limited air cover, a lack of flexibility” and a command approach which is “prepared to reinforce failure and repeat mistakes” has led to the high casualty rate, British intelligence added.</li> <li>• <b>Russia is “concentrating its efforts” on assaults on the eastern Ukrainian city of Siverodonetsk</b> and the nearby town of Toshkivka, the Ukrainian military has said in its latest operational <a href="#">report</a>.</li> <li>• <b>A verdict in the conflict’s first war crimes trial is due today</b> with a panel of judges in Kyiv <a href="#">determining the fate of 21-year-old Russian sergeant Vadim Shishimarin</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine is set to top the agenda at the four-day World Economic Forum in Davos</b>, which kicks off on Monday with a video address from <b>Zelenskiy</b>. This year Russia’s “house” at the event</li> </ul>

	<p>was transformed by Ukrainian artists into a “Russian war crimes house”, portraying images of misery and devastation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, spoke with Zelenskiy on Sunday evening about Russia’s blockade of Odesa</b>, Ukraine’s largest shipping port. The blockade of Ukraine’s ports has been a growing concern for world leaders as many continue to warn about global food security, in particular for developing countries.</li> <li>• <b>The Moscow-installed mayor of Enerhodar, a southern city of Ukraine and the location of Europe’s largest nuclear power plant, has been wounded in an explosion.</b> Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported that <b>Andrey Shevchik</b> was in intensive care.</li> <li>• <b>A bid by Ukraine to join the European Union would not be finalised for “15 or 20 years”</b>, France’s Europe minister said. “We have to be honest. If you say Ukraine is going to join the EU in six months, or a year or two, you’re lying,” Clément Beaune said. “It’s probably in 15 or 20 years. It takes a long time.”</li> <li>• <b>Zelenskiy has extended Ukraine’s martial law for three months through to 23 August. Ukraine’s parliament also banned the symbols “Z” and “V”</b>, used by Russia’s military to promote its war in Ukraine, but agreed to Zelenskiy’s call to allow their use for educational or historic purposes.</li> <li>• <b>Olena Zelenska has given a rare interview with Zelenskiy, only their second public appearance together since Russia launched its invasion.</b> She recounts the “anxiety and stupor” she felt on 24 February, and says that even though she has barely seen her husband since, “no one, not even the war, could take him away” from her.</li> <li>• <b>Technicians linked to the Syrian military’s infamous barrel bombs that have wreaked devastation across much of the country <a href="#">have been deployed to Russia</a></b> to help potentially prepare for a similar campaign in the Ukraine war, European officials believe. Intelligence officers say more than 50 specialists have been in Russia for several weeks working alongside officials from president Vladimir Putin’s military.</li> <li>• <b>YouTube <a href="#">has taken down more than 70,000 videos and 9,000 channels</a> related to the war in Ukraine</b> for violating content guidelines, including removal of videos that referred to the invasion as a “liberation mission”.</li> <li>• <b>New Zealand will deploy another 30 defence force troops to the UK, to help train 230 Ukrainian soldiers in using a howitzer gun.</b> The government will also provide 40 gun sights and a small quantity of ammunition for training purposes.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 US will defend Taiwan if China attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/us-would-defend-taiwan-if-attacked-by-china-says-joe-biden">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/us-would-defend-taiwan-if-attacked-by-china-says-joe-biden</a>
GIST	<p>Joe Biden has said the US would intervene militarily to defend Taiwan if it came under attack from China – a statement that is likely to enrage Beijing as concern grows over Chinese military activity in the region.</p> <p>Speaking in Tokyo on the second day of his visit to Japan, Biden said the US’s responsibility to protect the self-ruled island – which China considers a renegade province – was “even stronger” after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, in one of the most forceful statements in support of Taiwan in decades.</p> <p>“That’s the commitment we made,” Biden said, after he told his Japanese counterpart, Fumio Kishida, that Washington backed Japan’s permanent membership of a reformed UN security council and Tokyo’s plans to beef up its security with record levels of defence spending, as it seeks to counter a nuclear-armed North Korea and an increasingly assertive China.</p> <p>The US president said any attempt by China to use force against Taiwan would “just not be appropriate ... it would dislocate the entire region and be another action similar to what happened in Ukraine”.</p>

In accordance with Beijing's "one China" principle, the US acknowledges Beijing's position that there is only one Chinese government and does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. But it maintains unofficial contacts with Taiwan, including a de facto embassy, and supplies it with military equipment.

"America is committed to a one China policy but that does not mean China has the jurisdiction to use force to take Taiwan," Biden said, adding: "My expectation is that will not happen."

The president's national security aides shifted in their seats and studied Biden closely as he responded to the question, with several looking down as he gave his answer on Taiwan's defence.

Last August, a senior Biden administration official was forced to point out that US policy on Taiwan had not changed after Biden appeared to suggest the US would defend the island if it were attacked, a deviation from a long-held US position of "strategic ambiguity".

China's growing influence in the region, including military drills near Taiwan and air and maritime activity around an island chain in the East China Sea administered by Japan, has emerged as a key theme of Biden's visit, even overshadowing North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

On Monday, Biden and Kishida committed to working closely in response to China's "increasingly coercive behaviour that runs counter to international law", according to a White House account of their meeting.

Later, Biden voiced support for Japanese plans to strengthen its defences in the face of a nuclear-armed North Korea and increasingly assertive China. Japan's ruling party is considering calls for the country to acquire the ability to conduct a first strike against enemy bases if it believes it is in danger of imminent attack – a move that some say violates its "pacifist" postwar constitution.

"I applaud Japan's determination to strengthen its defence – a strong Japan, and a strong Japan-US alliance, is a force for good in the world," Biden said.

Kishida said he would "fundamentally" reinforce Japan's defences, adding: "I have said that all options are on the table, including the capability for Japan to carry out first strikes on enemy bases."

Local media reported that Japanese officials had struggled to decide what to serve Biden – who has a penchant for pizza and ice-cream – during his stay in Tokyo.

In the afternoon, Biden was due to launch a new regional trade pact designed to show the US's commitment to the region and bring stability to commerce after disruption caused by the war in Ukraine.

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) will help the US and Asian countries work more closely on supply chains, digital trade, clean energy, worker protections and anticorruption efforts. But IPEF members will not negotiate tariffs or ease market access – a move that would be unpopular at home among voters who believe granting greater access to the US market would put American jobs at risk.

The pact, which is unlikely to include any binding commitments, is being seen as an attempt by the US to exert some economic influence in the region five years after Donald Trump pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. And it will not include the world's second-biggest economy, China, which on Monday condemned Biden's renewed focus on US military and economic involvement in the region as doomed to fail.

The "so-called 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' is, in essence, a strategy of creating division, inciting confrontation and undermining peace", China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, said, according to the state media outlet Xinhua. "No matter how it is packaged or disguised, it will inevitably fail in the end."

	<p>Wang said Tuesday's planned meeting in Tokyo between the leaders of the four Quad nations – the US, Japan, India and Australia – was an attempt by Washington “to form small cliques in the name of freedom and openness”, all the while hoping “to contain China”.</p> <p>North Korea continued to cast a shadow over Biden's visit, even as he preferred to focus on trade and jobs. Asked on Sunday if he had a message for North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, Biden said only: “Hello ... period.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 UN: 100M forcibly displaced</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/23/total-displaced-people-now-at-staggering-milestone-of-100m-says-un">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/23/total-displaced-people-now-at-staggering-milestone-of-100m-says-un</a>
GIST	<p>The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has said the global number of forcibly displaced people has passed 100 million for the first time, describing it as a “staggering milestone”.</p> <p>The UN high commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi, said the grim new statistic should act as a wake-up call for the international community and that more action is needed internationally to address the root causes of forced displacement around the world.</p> <p>Officials said that the number of people forced to flee conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution had risen to an unprecedented level due to the war in <a href="#">Ukraine</a> along with other deadly conflicts.</p> <p>“One hundred million is a stark figure – sobering and alarming in equal measure,” said Grandi. “This must serve as a wake-up call to resolve and prevent destructive conflicts, end persecution and address the underlying causes that force innocent people to flee their homes.”</p> <p>The figure hit 90 million at the end of 2021, propelled by a range of conflicts including in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, <a href="#">Ethiopia</a>, Myanmar and Nigeria.</p> <p>Eight million Ukrainian people have been displaced within their home country as a result of the war, along with more than six million refugee movements registered from Ukraine.</p> <p>“The international response to people fleeing war in Ukraine has been overwhelmingly positive,” said Grandi. “Compassion is alive and we need similar mobilisation for all crises around the world. But ultimately humanitarian aid is a palliative, not a cure. To reverse this trend the only answer is peace and stability so that innocent people are not forced to gamble between acute danger at home or precarious flight or exile.”</p> <p>The term “displaced person” was first used during the second world war, in which more than 40 million people were forcibly displaced.</p> <p>A <a href="#">report</a> from the House of Lords library in December 2021 cites UNHCR statistics that the number of people forcibly displaced globally exceeded 84 million by mid-2021. This was an increase from the estimated 82.4 million at the end of 2020. Armed conflicts, violence and human rights violations were leading causes. The report also noted that the Covid-19 pandemic, disasters, extreme weather, and the other effects of climate breakdown had created additional challenges for displaced people.</p> <p>UNHCR reported that, by the end of June 2021, the number of refugees under its mandate had surpassed 20.8 million, an increase of 172,000 on the end of 2020. More than half of those who were granted international protection were from five countries – Central African Republic (71,800), South Sudan (61,700), Syria (38,800), Afghanistan (25,200) and Nigeria (20,300).</p> <p>Syria continued to account for the world's largest refugee population. Venezuelans were the second largest group and Afghans made up the third largest group.</p>



	<p>The three countries hosting the most displaced people were Turkey with 3,696,800, Colombia with 1,743,900 and Uganda with 1,475,300.</p> <p>On 16 June UNHCR will release its annual Global Trends report outlining a full set of global, regional and national data for 2021 along with more limited updates to April 2022.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/22 Beijing restricts movement amid Covid rise</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/beijing-extends-work-from-home-order-as-covid-19-cases-rise/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/beijing-extends-work-from-home-order-as-covid-19-cases-rise/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BEIJING (AP) — Beijing extended orders for workers and students to stay home and ordered additional mass testing Monday as cases of COVID-19 again rose in the Chinese capital.</p> <p>Numerous residential compounds in the city have restricted movement in and out, although conditions remain far less severe than in Shanghai, where millions of citizens have been under varying degrees of lockdown for two months.</p> <p>Beijing on Monday reported an uptick in cases to 99, rising from a previous daily average of around 50.</p> <p>In total, China reported 802 new cases Monday, marking a steady decline interrupted only by small-scale localized outbreaks. Despite that, the government has hewed to strict quarantine, lockdown and testing measures under its “zero-COVID” approach, even while the outside world is opening up.</p> <p>Shanghai reported 480,000 people were still confined to their homes, while 1.59 million were permitted to move around their neighborhoods and 21.2 million were under lighter restrictions.</p> <p>The reopening of transport links out of Shanghai created an exodus of migrant workers and foreigners, desperate to escape shortages of food, medicine and daily necessities. Among those who remain, many were still restricted to one hour of shopping time, entrusted with bringing home supplies for their entire building.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/22 NKorea large state funeral despite Covid</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/kim-other-n-koreans-attend-large-funeral-amid-covid-worry/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/kim-other-n-koreans-attend-large-funeral-amid-covid-worry/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A huge number of North Koreans including leader Kim Jong Un attended a funeral for a top official, state media reported Monday, as the country maintained the much-disputed claim that its suspected coronavirus outbreak is subsiding.</p> <p>Since admitting earlier this month to an outbreak of the highly contagious omicron variant, North Korea has only stated how many people have fevers daily and identified just a fraction of the cases as COVID-19. Its state media said Monday that 2.8 million people have fallen ill due to an unidentified fever but only 68 of them died since late April, an extremely low fatality rate if the illness is COVID-19 as suspected.</p> <p>North Korea has limited testing capability for that many sick people, but some experts say it is also likely underreporting mortalities to protect Kim from political damage.</p> <p>The official Korean Central News Agency said Kim attended the funeral Sunday of Hyon Chol Hae, a Korean People’s Army marshal who played a key role in grooming him as the country’s next leader before Kim’s father, Kim Jong Il, died in late 2011.</p> <p>In what was one of the country’s biggest state funerals since his father’s death, a bare-faced Kim Jong Un carried Hyon’s coffin with other top officials who wore masks before he threw earth to his grave with his hands at the national cemetery. Kim and hundreds of masked soldiers and officials also deeply bowed before Hyon’s grave, state TV footage showed.</p>

State TV earlier showed thousands of other masked soldiers clad in olive-green uniforms gathered at a Pyongyang plaza taking off their hats and paying a silent tribute before a funeral limousine carrying Hyon's body left for the cemetery. KCNA said "a great many" soldiers and citizens also turned out along streets to express their condolences.

Kim often arranges big funerals for late senior officials loyal to his ruling family and shows a human side in a possible bid to draw the support of the country's ruling elite and boost internal unity.

KCNA quoted Kim as saying that "the name of Hyon Chol Hae would be always remembered along with the august name of Kim Jong Il." He wept when he visited a mourning station established for Hyon last week.

During Sunday's funeral, most people, except for Kim Jong Un and honor guards, wore masks. The North's ongoing outbreak was likely caused by the April 25 military parade and related events that drew large crowds of people who wore no masks.

North Korea maintains a nationwide lockdown and other stringent rules to curb the virus outbreak. Region-to-region movement is banned, but key agricultural, economic and other industrial activities were continuing in an apparent effort to minimize harm to the country's already moribund economy.

KCNA said Monday that 167,650 new fever cases had been detected in the past 24-hour period, a notable drop from the peak of about 390,000 reported about one week ago. It said one more person died and that the fever's fatality rate was 0.002%.

"All the people of (North Korea) maintain the current favorable turn in the anti-epidemic campaign with maximum awareness, in response to the call of the party central committee for defending their precious life and future with confidence in sure victory and redoubled great efforts," KCNA said.

Experts question the North's tally, given North Korea's 26 million people are mostly unvaccinated and about 40% are reportedly undernourished. The public health care system is almost broken and chronically short of medicine and supplies. In South Korea, where most of its 52 million people are fully vaccinated, the fatality rate of COVID-19 was 0.13% as of Monday.

South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers last week that some of the fever cases tallied by North Korea include people suffering from other illnesses like measles, typhoid and pertussis. But some civilian experts believe most of the cases were COVID-19.

Before admitting to the omicron outbreak on May 12, North Korea had insisted it was virus-free throughout the pandemic. It snubbed millions of vaccines offered by the U.N.-backed COVAX distribution program and has not responded to offers of medicine and other aid from South Korea and the United States.

The World Health Organization has also pleaded for more information on the outbreak but not gotten a response.

Some observers say North Korea would only receive assistance from China, its last major ally, because Western aid shipments could hurt Kim's leadership as he's repeatedly called for "a self-reliance" to fight against U.S.-led pressure campaigns.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 WHO: pandemic 'most certainly not over'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/who-chief-the-covid-pandemic-is-most-certainly-not-over/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/who-chief-the-covid-pandemic-is-most-certainly-not-over/</a>
GIST	BERLIN (AP) — The COVID-19 pandemic is "most certainly not over," the head of the World Health Organization warned Sunday, despite a decline in reported cases since the peak of the omicron wave. He told governments that "we lower our guard at our peril."

The U.N. health agency's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, told officials gathered in Geneva for opening of the WHO's annual meeting that "declining testing and sequencing means we are blinding ourselves to the evolution of the virus." He also noted that almost 1 billion people in lower-income countries still haven't been vaccinated.

In a weekly report Thursday on the global situation, WHO said the number of new COVID-19 cases appears to have stabilized after weeks of decline since late March, while the overall number of weekly deaths dropped.

While there has been progress, with 60% of the world's population vaccinated, "it's not over anywhere until it's over everywhere," Tedros said.

"Reported cases are increasing in almost 70 countries in all regions, and this in a world in which testing rates have plummeted," he added.

Reported deaths are rising in Africa, the continent with the lowest vaccination coverage, he said, and only 57 countries — almost all of them wealthy — have vaccinated 70% of their people.

While the world's vaccine supply has improved, there is "insufficient political commitment to roll out vaccines" in some countries, gaps in "operational or financial capacity" in others, he said.

"In all, we see vaccine hesitancy driven by misinformation and disinformation," Tedros said. "The pandemic will not magically disappear, but we can end it."

Tedros is expected to be appointed for a second five-year term this week at the World Health Assembly, the annual meeting of the WHO's member countries.

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HEADLINE	05/22 AAA: Seattle #2 Memorial Day destination
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/travel/seattle-among-top-memorial-day-weekend-travel-destinations/281-c4828d58-4170-43c7-859f-d53c8e7f4035">https://www.king5.com/article/travel/seattle-among-top-memorial-day-weekend-travel-destinations/281-c4828d58-4170-43c7-859f-d53c8e7f4035</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Estimates say more than 39 million people are planning to travel away from home this Memorial Day Weekend.</p> <p>A solid number of those looking to travel will be heading to the Seattle area, as a report from AAA shows Seattle is ranked as the number two U.S. destination for Memorial Day Weekend travelers.</p> <p>The predicted influx is a welcome sight for businesses on the Waterfront. Boat tours are filled up and people crowd the sidewalks.</p> <p>"It was kind of a ghost town for awhile but now it's usually shoulder to shoulder tourists everywhere," said Darren Patton, who is an employee at The Frankfurter on Pier 55.</p> <p>The line grows as people wait to get a bite to eat at shops like The Frankfurter.</p> <p>On days like Sunday, Patton makes hundreds of hotdogs.</p> <p>"Yeah it's nice to see people around again, if not just for business to see people happy and walking around," said Patton.</p> <p>It's bringing the Waterfront to life for shops who depend on tourist traffic.</p> <p>"Our Christmas is definitely in the summertime," said Neal James, who is the Manager at Ye Olde Curiosity Shop.</p>

	<p>Christmas could be coming early this year, as AAA forecasts 39.2 million people will travel this Memorial Day Weekend.</p> <p>It's no surprise to Carl Jackson, visiting Seattle from Nevada.</p> <p>"Technically should be number one because I'm already ready to come back just being honest. I love it out here, it's fantastic."</p> <p>Sunday's foot traffic might be foreshadowing the summer to come.</p> <p>"We're ready for things to get back to normal and obviously it's going to be a little bit until it gets back to normal normal but with the people coming back, it's going to be good," said James.</p> <p>According to AAA, the top Memorial Day travel destination is Orlando, followed by Seattle, then Miami. The top international destination is Vancouver, Canada.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Seattle encampment fire spews smoke I-5</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/encampment-fire-spewed-large-plume-of-smoke-over-i-5-no-injuries-reported">https://komonews.com/news/local/encampment-fire-spewed-large-plume-of-smoke-over-i-5-no-injuries-reported</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - An encampment fire under the Denny Way overpass spewed a large plume of smoke over I-5 Sunday afternoon.</p> <p>Seattle Fire crews responded to the fire at Eastlake Ave and Denny Way just after 12:30 p.m.</p> <p>No injuries have been reported and the cause of the fire is under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Summer delays on North Cascades Highway</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/travel/delays-north-cascades-highway/281-741e002a-06d6-4854-8872-46eac15f01cc">https://www.krem.com/article/travel/delays-north-cascades-highway/281-741e002a-06d6-4854-8872-46eac15f01cc</a>
GIST	<p>NORTH CASCADE, Wash. — If you're planning to cross Highway 20 into the North Cascades this summer you'll want to pack extra snacks for the kids and make an extended playlist because it could be a very long drive.</p> <p>Amidst the breathtaking natural beauty of the North Cascades, the one thing that catches your eye the most these days is something quite unnatural.</p> <p>A stoplight in the middle of Highway 20.</p> <p>A short stretch of the highway at milepost 113.7 near Newhalem washed out during the historic November floods. One entire lane collapsed. The road is now down to a single lane with a stoplight alternating traffic.</p> <p>Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) crews have assessed the damage and are currently designing a fix that will include a costly new culvert. Work will start in July and last through October, but potentially longer.</p> <p>"There is always the possibility of weather to contend with, and we do have some ongoing supply chain issues that I think everyone is pretty familiar with," said RB McKeon with WSDOT.</p> <p>And that's just the beginning.</p>

	<p>The state says at certain points this summer there will be 4 or 5 projects along the highway between Sedro-Woolley and Winthrop at the same time.</p> <p>"There's sort of two approaches," explained McKeon. "We can cram it all together in one summer and ask people to be extra patient for one summer, or stretch it out to multiple summers and inconvenience people over and over and over again."</p> <p>The extensive road work could mean a tough tourist season for cities like Winthrop that are still struggling with the fallout of recent wildfires.</p> <p>As for how all those delays may impact crews traveling across the pass to fight wildfires, WSDOT says those crews will have top priority.</p> <p>"We will change how we work if we need to," said McKeon. "We want to make sure they can get where they're going and we're not an impediment to that."</p> <p>The road work will certainly mean extended delays for anyone planning to visit North Cascades National Park -- trying to get away from all of the traffic and congestion.</p> <p>"We're asking people to just be patient and maybe spend some extra time enjoying the scenery with the windows down as you're stuck in traffic," said McKeon.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Calif. firefighters battle 4 blazes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/4-california-wildfires-rage-during-hot-windy-conditions">https://www.q13fox.com/news/4-california-wildfires-rage-during-hot-windy-conditions</a>
GIST	<p><b>VACAVILLE, Calif.</b> - Four <a href="#">wildfires</a> burned throughout California this weekend amid hot and windy conditions.</p> <p>Crews said Sunday they were gaining ground on the Quail fire in Vacaville, as they work to contain three other blazes throughout the state.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Quail fire broke out Saturday</a> and is 45 percent contained after burning 150 acres. Investigators said it was likely caused by a resident mowing their lawn, and that the area dodged a bullet.</p> <p>"Darn foolishness," said Vacaville resident Mel Toppance. "This fire didn't have to start. People have to use their heads. Luckily these firefighters did a terrific job."</p> <p>Several neighborhood homes were threatened by the flames.</p> <p>"The fire ran up the hill, and it caused issues because of the terrain and also the steep hills that we're dealing with," said Cal Fire official, Tyree Zander.</p> <p>The huge advantage in this blaze was that Calfire's main firefighting air force base, McClellan Field in Sacramento, is no more than 50 air miles from the Quail Fire site. From there, almost any size or speed of aircraft can be dispatched for a very quick trip to close by locations of within and of the many fire attack bases throughout the state.</p> <p>Calfire can also choose from hundreds of live-streaming cameras to see how to prioritize air strikes and crew dispatches for maximum effect within their capabilities.</p> <p>"We could be up to 25 aircraft flying in and out of here," said Calire Chief Dusty Martin, McClellan Air Tanker Base Chief.</p> <p>Evacuation orders were lifted Sunday, and there were no reports of injuries.</p>

Firefighters in Yuba County said they are still putting out hot spots from the Golden fire. It started Friday, just south of Camptonville.

Officials said that fire is fully contained after burning 20 acres.

No homes were lost or damaged in the Golden fire. The cause is still under investigation.

Smoke drifting from the [Owens fire](#) in Mendocino County reached parts of the Bay Area and prompted an air quality advisory in San Francisco and on the Peninsula.

The Edmonston fire continues to burn east of I-5, near Fresno.

Cal Fire said that blaze burned nearly 700 acres since it started Thursday and is 65 percent contained. Investigators are still searching for the cause.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 DHS IG: ICE failed test migrants for Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/migrants-not-tested-covid-before-commercial-flights/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/migrants-not-tested-covid-before-commercial-flights/</a>
GIST	<p>The top watchdog for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) revealed that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) failed to test migrants before transferring, transporting and releasing migrants from ICE detention facilities – a clear violation of the department's COVID-19 policy.</p> <p>"We identified numerous instances where ERO could not provide evidence that single adults, family units, and [unaccompanied children] were tested for COVID-19 before transport on domestic commercial flights," the report, authored by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at DHS, found.</p> <p>The watchdog noted that "without clear COVID-19 testing policies and controls in place to enforce these policies, ERO may transport COVID-19–positive migrants on domestic commercial flights." The report said the failed policy "risk[ed] exposing other migrants, ERO staff, and the general public to COVID-19."</p> <p>As it relates to COVID-19 testing for unaccompanied minors, the OIG report acknowledged that while ICE, CBP, and HHS signed a memorandum of agreement in March 2021 outlining interagency coordination, that agreement "does not define which entity, if any, is responsible for administering COVID-19 tests to [unaccompanied children]."</p> <p>In a letter dated April 1, 2021, DHS' chief medical officer, Dr. Pritesh Gandhi, wrote in a memo to then-acting CBP Commissioner Troy Miller and acting ICE Director Tae Johnson that the prevalence of coronavirus' alpha variant "necessitates an immediate change to the testing approach of unaccompanied children in our custody."</p> <p>"Effective immediately, all [unaccompanied children] should be tested <i>prior</i> to transport to Health and Human Services (HHS) facilities. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) should transport [unaccompanied children] in COVID-19 <i>positive</i> and <i>negative</i> cohorts," the letter, included in the OIG report, reads. Gandhi also noted that a lack of beds in HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement facilities resulted in an increased number of migrant children held at CBP facilities and increased time in custody. "Therefore, the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases."</p> <p>Yet the watchdog found that while DHS' chief medical officer had recommended that ICE and CBP test unaccompanied children, neither entity ensured that unaccompanied children were tested for COVID before they were transported.</p> <p>"Instead, ERO officials deferred testing responsibility for [unaccompanied children] to HHS," the inspector general wrote.</p>



And while ERO officials stated that COVID-19-positive unaccompanied minors would not be transported on commercial flights, officials "did not record which [unaccompanied children] HHS tested for COVID-19." Instead, they relied on "word of mouth to determine which [unaccompanied children] were COVID-19-positive and -negative."

The inspector general also found that while DHS' Office of the Chief Medical Officer initially asserted that HHS-contracted healthcare providers at CBP facilities test all unaccompanied children for COVID-19 before transport to HHS facilities, HHS later clarified that its contractors test unaccompanied minors "in only five of the nine U.S. Border Patrol sectors along the southwest border." DHS' senior medical officer later confirmed this information, according to the DHS OIG report. Contractors in Texas sectors Big Bend and Laredo Sectors, as well as California's San Diego and El Centro sectors did not test accordingly.

Recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for U.S. and non-citizen travelers have evolved throughout the pandemic. In December 2020, the CDC recommended COVID-19 testing for all travelers 1 to 3 days before a flight. More than a year later, the CDC updated its guidance to recommend COVID-19 testing 1 to 3 days before a domestic flight for non-vaccinated travelers, following the nationwide vaccination rollout in April 2021.

In January 2021, the CDC required that all air passengers, two years of age and older, arriving from a foreign country test negative for COVID-19 or provide documentation of having recovered from COVID-19. Later that year, in November 2021, the CDC mandated that non-U.S. citizens, 18 years and older, be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before traveling by air to the U.S. Most recently, in January 2022, DHS extended that vaccine requirement to non-U.S. citizens seeking to enter the U.S. via land ports of entry and ferry terminals at both the U.S.-Canadian and Mexican borders.

At the conclusion of its report, DHS' inspector general recommended that ICE:

1. *Coordinate with CBP and the DHS Chief Medical Officer to determine and document whether noncitizen unaccompanied children and family units should be tested for COVID-19 before transport on domestic commercial flights. If ICE ERO determines noncitizen unaccompanied children and family units should be tested, we recommend ICE ERO develop detailed testing policies and establish controls to ensure staff and contractors follow the policies. These policies should include modes of transportation and timeframes for mandatory testing before transport.*
1. *Establish controls to ensure staff and contractors follow existing requirements to test single adults for COVID-19 before transfer using domestic commercial flights.*
1. *Clarify existing COVID-19 testing policies to include modes of transportation and timeframes for mandatory testing before transport.*
1. *Maintain complete and accurate migrant COVID-19 testing and transport records.*

In a written response to the Office of the Inspector General's report, last month, ICE concurred with all recommendations except the second.

"ICE leadership agrees with the intent of OIG's findings and considers a number of proposed actions regarding the testing of noncitizen family units or unaccompanied children already addressed," wrote Acting ICE Chief of Staff Jason Houser. "ICE is committed to ensuring non-citizens in its custody reside in safe, secure and humane environments, and under appropriate conditions of confinement. As such, ICE has implemented, executed and ensures healthcare protocols and testing procedures for COVID-19 in alignment with the CDC's Guidance on Management of COVID-19 in Correctional and Detention Facilities."

Since the DHS Inspector first launched its investigation, the U.S. COVID-19 landscape has evolved.

DHS is now vaccinating as many as 1,000 migrants in U.S. custody per day as part of a recently launched vaccination program along the border with Mexico. Since late March, the U.S. government has [vaccinated more than 20,000 migrants and asylum-seekers](#) in U.S. border custody, Dr. Pritesh Gandhi told CBS News, this week.



	<p>The vaccination effort predates the <a href="#">end of Title 42</a>, the policy first implemented by the Trump administration that allows U.S. officials to expel migrants without processing their asylum claims.</p> <p>Title 42, which the U.S. government previously argued was needed to prevent migrants from spreading the coronavirus inside border facilities, is set to end next week, pending ongoing litigation. A federal judge in Louisiana could force the Biden administration to continue the policy.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Average gas price jumps \$.33 to \$4.71/gal.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/average-us-gasoline-price-jumps-33-cents-471-84895062">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/average-us-gasoline-price-jumps-33-cents-471-84895062</a>
GIST	<p>CAMARILLO, Calif. -- The average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline spiked 33 cents over the past two weeks to \$4.71 per gallon.</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey said Sunday that the price jump comes amid higher crude oil costs and tight gasoline supplies.</p> <p>The average price at the pump is \$1.61 higher than it was one year ago.</p> <p>Nationwide, the highest average price for regular-grade gas is in the San Francisco Bay Area, at \$6.20 per gallon. The lowest average is in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at \$3.92 per gallon.</p> <p>According to the survey, the average price of diesel rose 9 cents over two weeks, to \$5.66 a gallon.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Beijing relocates Covid negative residents</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.barrons.com/news/thousands-of-covid-negative-beijing-residents-sent-to-quarantine-01653110106">https://www.barrons.com/news/thousands-of-covid-negative-beijing-residents-sent-to-quarantine-01653110106</a>
GIST	<p>Thousands of Covid-negative Beijing residents were relocated to quarantine hotels overnight due to a handful of infections, as the capital begins to take more extreme control measures resembling virus-hit Shanghai.</p> <p>Beijing has been battling its worst outbreak since the pandemic started. The Omicron variant has infected over 1,300 since late April, leading city restaurants, schools and tourist attractions to be closed indefinitely.</p> <p>China's strategy to achieve zero Covid cases includes strict border closures, lengthy quarantines, mass testing and rapid, targeted lockdowns.</p> <p>Over 13,000 residents of the locked-down Nanxinyuan residential compound in southeast Beijing were relocated to quarantine hotels overnight Friday due to 26 new infections discovered in recent days, according to photos and a government notice widely shared on social media.</p> <p>"Experts have determined that all Nanxinyuan residents undergo centralised quarantine beginning midnight May 21 for seven days," authorities from Chaoyang district said Friday.</p> <p>"Please cooperate, otherwise you will bear the corresponding legal consequences."</p> <p>Social media photos showed hundreds of residents with luggage queueing in the dark to board coaches parked outside the compound.</p> <p>"Some of us have been locked down for 28 days since April 23, and we all tested negative throughout," wrote one resident on the Twitter-like Weibo.</p> <p>"A lot of my neighbours are elderly or have young children."</p>

"The transfer really makes us feel like we're in a wartime scene," resident and real estate blogger Liu Guangyu posted on Weibo early Saturday.

Liu told AFP that they were only notified of the move half a day in advance, but said he was satisfied with the hotel.

Residents were told to pack their clothes and essential belongings, and that their homes would be disinfected afterwards, according to screenshots shared on Weibo.

Last month, thousands of Covid-negative Shanghai residents were bussed to makeshift quarantine centres hundreds of kilometres away as the metropolis of 25 million doubled down on efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

Weibo users expressed widespread anxiety that Beijing authorities were taking a similar approach to Shanghai, where residents have chafed under a months-long lockdown that has denied many people adequate access to food and medical care.

The Weibo hashtag "All residents of Nanxinyuan compound were dragged to quarantine" was blocked by Saturday morning.

"This is exactly the same as Shanghai, the first step is to cut off water and electricity, then demand keys... then disinfect homes. Electrical appliances, wooden furniture, clothes, food -- they're all done for," read one comment.

Chaoyang District disease control authorities told AFP that it does not release information externally and to rely on the Beijing authorities' Covid press conference.

Beijing authorities on Saturday extended work from home guidance to one more district, one day after halting the vast majority of public bus and subway services.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Bigger problem? Surge in Navy deserters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.npr.org/2022/05/21/1100512920/navy-deserters-more-than-doubled-indicator-of-bigger-problem">https://www.npr.org/2022/05/21/1100512920/navy-deserters-more-than-doubled-indicator-of-bigger-problem</a>
GIST	<p>In 2021, 157 sailors illegally fled the U.S. Navy, more than double the number who deserted in 2019. Although all but eight of them eventually returned to their units, a military legal expert says the dramatic increase in desertions may be a sign of a bigger issue.</p> <p>The Navy has seen an increase in desertions over the previous three years. In 2019, 63 sailors fled from their duty stations, and another 98 did so in 2020, a Navy spokesperson, Lt. Cmdr. Devin Arneson, told NPR. The number of deserters still at large had been on the decline between 2017 and 2019.</p> <p>But other branches of the military didn't see a similar increase in the past three years. Desertions in the Army dropped by 47%, from 328 in 2019 to 174 in 2021, and the Marine Corps reported 59 in 2019 and 31 in 2021. The Coast Guard said it didn't record a single deserter between 2019 and 2021.</p> <p>The increase in Navy desertions was first reported by NBC News.</p> <p>Arneson said she cannot speculate about the increase in Navy desertions or why a sailor would choose desertion — an unauthorized absence in which a military member has no intention of returning. It's a grave offense that can result in a dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of pay, a loss of benefits and jail time.</p> <p>Leaving the military early is almost impossible, a legal expert says</p>

But one former JAG officer — with over 11 years of military justice experience — said the issue underscores a harsh reality for some service members who find themselves seemingly stuck in a line of work they dislike that's tied to a multiyear contract.

Stephanie Kral spent over seven years in the Air Force serving as a legal officer. She served as a senior trial council litigator and defense attorney before leaving the service to work as a civilian military defense lawyer. She said many of the service members who resort to desertion are junior enlisted members with limited options should their military experience unfold differently from what they had hoped.

"[For] somebody who just doesn't like the environment, it's almost impossible to leave," Kral told NPR.

And though there are ways out — such as a medical discharge for individuals with health conditions preventing them from fulfilling their duties — the waters surrounding mental health are a bit murkier.

"Somebody who's suffering with an acute mental health crisis ... should not ordinarily result in a mental health discharge," Kral said. "What should happen is that they receive the care and treatment that they need to be ready to rehab their mental health and then go back to being a member of the fleet. Unfortunately, that's not always what we see."

Arneson said in statement provided to NPR that the Navy recognizes that sailors are subjected to an array of stressful situations over the course of their service and that the mental health of every member is an important part to mission success.

But Kral said that sailors, Marines, soldiers and other members of the armed forces often don't have access to the help they need.

"Regardless of what upper-level leadership says about trying to erase the stigma of mental health in our services, that does not play out when you get to the boots on the ground or the deck-plate level of actual experiences of junior service members," Kral said.

Military members who feel trapped by their contracts find themselves in a precarious position. They can stay in a job they hate and wait for their contract to end; they can become a deserter — a fugitive on the run; or, in the most extreme circumstances, they can choose to take their own life, Kral said.

Kral said if desertion is becoming an issue, then perhaps the military should explore other options regarding how to handle individuals who want to leave the service.

"Right now, the ability to discharge or to end the contract early is essentially entirely in the hands of big Navy, big Air Force, big Army. They are the ones that get to decide," Kral said. "So it puts the military in a position of power to, frankly, just abuse their people [and] not provide them resources [and] put them in situations like on the [USS] George Washington."

Kral was referring to a string of suicides aboard the aircraft carrier that is undergoing extensive repairs in Virginia. Three sailors aboard USS George Washington died by suicide in one week in April, which has prompted an investigation set to be released next year, the U.S. Naval Institute News reported.

Leaders should consider moving away from insisting junior servicemembers pursue a long-term military career, Kral said, and instead provide a way out for those who no longer want to serve. She also acknowledges that the Defense Department has a job to do, and allowing service members leave when times get hard doesn't coincide with an effective military.

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HEADLINE	05/22 Russian special forces dog switches sides
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10842015/Russian-special-forces-Belgian-Malinois-dog-switches-sides-Ukrainian-soldiers.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10842015/Russian-special-forces-Belgian-Malinois-dog-switches-sides-Ukrainian-soldiers.html</a>

## GIST

An abandoned Russian war dog has swapped sides - and is now saving Ukrainian soldiers on the battlefield.

Belgian Malinois Max, 3, was found starving by Ukrainians in the Mykolaiv region and was nursed back to health.

He has now been redeployed as a minesweeping dog after being taught to understand Ukrainian commands.

Dmitry, a member of the National Guard of Ukraine, said: 'From now on, Max will serve on the right side, defending Ukraine and nibbling Russian asses.'

His comrade added: 'Max has become a real favourite with the guards.'

'We can't understand why the Russians would leave behind such a lovely animal.'

'Ukrainians love dogs, they regard them as part of the family.'

Max was found still wearing a camouflaged collar issued to the Russian hounds.

A British special forces soldier told the Daily Star: 'Malinois are the same breed used by the SAS and the SBS. They are brave, highly intelligent and athletic animals.'

'They are tremendously loyal but Max has obviously been convinced that the Ukrainians are now his new masters.'

He added: 'I'm very surprised that one of these animals was actually abandoned by the Russians because they are a highly-prized asset.'

'Also the bond between a dog and its handler is very strong.'

'It would be like leaving a member of your family behind.'

Max is not the only pooch who is making an effort to protect Ukrainians.

Jack Russell Patron is a national hero, having recently been awarded a medal for valour by Ukrainian President Volodymyr [Zelensky](#), has 250,000 [Instagram](#) followers and is the star of billboards symbolising his country's defiance of Vladimir [Putin](#).

Originally bought to appear in pedigree dog shows, Patron has detected more than 200 deadly Russian landmines and unexploded bombs.

Wagging his tail, Patron – whose name translates to Bullet in English – earns his reward of a piece of cheese from his owner and handler Mykhailo Iliev. He has to be careful with the treats. Patron weighs 4kg, handily less than the 5kg that sets off most Russian munitions.

The two-year-old pet found fame when Ukraine's State Emergency Service posted a video online of their mascot working in the war-torn northern city of Chernihiv. He received his medal at the presidential palace in Kyiv with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who was visiting, looking on.

As we travel to the landmine-strewn forests around Chernihiv, troops and police officers at checkpoints cheer Patron and pose for selfies. 'He gets a lot more tired now because of all the attention,' says Mykhailo. 'But it's good to keep up the guys' morale.'

	<p>Reaching a clearing, Patron soon finds abandoned Russian trenches crammed with empty cases of missiles for Russia's Grad truck-mounted rocket launchers. Wearing his blue military harness, adorned with an embroidered bullet, Patron darts through the thicket to sniff out live munitions.</p> <p>After buying Patron, Mykhailo soon realised the dog could help his work as a bomb disposal expert.</p> <p>'My wife is also in the services and there was no one at home to look after him, so I have taken him to work with me every day since he was two months old,' he says.</p> <p>'This is his life, it is all he has known. It is just a matter of chance that we have such a capable dog. He is not a service dog, he is my pet, but he has an amazing nose and is an avid learner. He was meant to be a show dog but his destiny was to save people's lives, not to win prizes.'</p> <p>From six months, Patron was trained to detect TNT and gunpowder. When he does, he stops rigid and stands with his nose down until Mykhailo and his team approach.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Belgium mandates monkeypox quarantine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10841885/Doctors-warn-significant-rise-UK-monkeypox-cases-surge-two-three-weeks.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10841885/Doctors-warn-significant-rise-UK-monkeypox-cases-surge-two-three-weeks.html</a>
GIST	<p>Belgium has become the first country to introduce a compulsory 21-day monkeypox quarantine - as 14 countries now confirm outbreaks of the viral disease and doctors warn of a 'significant rise' in UK cases</p> <p>Those who contract the virus will now have to self-isolate for three weeks, Belgian health authorities have said, after three cases were recorded in the country.</p> <p>The infections, the first of which was recorded on Friday, are all linked to a festival in the port city of Antwerp.</p> <p>It comes as doctors have warned that the UK faces a 'significant' rise in infections and the government's response is 'critical' in containing its spread.</p> <p>Dr Claire Dewsnap, president of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV, has also said the outbreak could have a 'massive impact' on access to sexual health services in Britain.</p> <p>It comes as Dr Susan Hopkins, a chief medical adviser to the UK Health Security Agency, today also warned that monkeypox is spreading through community transmission in the UK with more cases being detected daily.</p> <p><a href="#">Sajid Javid</a> yesterday revealed another 11 Britons had tested positive for the virus, taking the total to 20.</p> <p>The cases include a British child currently in a critical condition at a <a href="#">London</a> hospital, while a further 100 infections have been recorded in Europe.</p> <p>Dr Dewsnap told <a href="#">Sky News</a>: 'Our response is really critical here.</p> <p>'There is going to be more diagnoses over the next week.</p> <p>'How many is hard to say. What worries me the most is there are infections across Europe, so this has already spread.</p> <p>'It's already circulating in the general population.</p> <p>'Getting on top of all those people's contacts is a massive job.</p>

'It could be really significant numbers over the next two or three weeks.'

She says she expects more cases to be identified around the UK, with a 'significant rise over this next week'.

The rare viral infection, which people usually pick up in the tropical areas of west and central Africa, can be transmitted by very close contact with an infected person.

It is usually mild, with most patients recovering within a few weeks without treatment.

However, the disease can prove fatal with the strain causing the current outbreak killing one in 100 infected.

The disease, which was first found in monkeys, can be transmitted from person to person through close physical contact - as well as sexual intercourse - and is caused by the monkeypox virus.

Dr Hopkins said updated figures for the weekend will be released on Monday as she warned of more cases 'on a daily basis'.

Speaking to BBC One's Morning Show, Dr Hopkins said: 'We will be releasing updated numbers tomorrow - over-the-weekend figures.'

'We are detecting more cases on a daily basis and I'd like to thank all of those people who are coming forward for testing to sexual health clinics, to the GPs and emergency department.'

And asked if there is community transmission in the UK, she said: 'Absolutely, we are finding cases that have no identified contact with an individual from west Africa, which is what we've seen previously in this country.'

'The community transmission is largely centred in urban areas and we are predominantly seeing it in individuals who self-identify as gay or bisexual, or other men who have sex with men.'

Asked why it is being found in that demographic, she said: 'That's because of the frequent close contacts they may have.'

'We would recommend to anyone who's having changes in sex partners regularly, or having close contact with individuals that they don't know, to come forward if they develop a rash.'

Dr Dewsnap also said she is concerned about the impact of monkeypox on the treatment of other infections as staff are diverted to tackle the outbreak.

She added: 'Some clinics that have had cases have had to advise people not to walk in.'

'They've primarily done that because if somebody has symptoms consistent with monkeypox, we don't want people sat in waiting rooms potentially infecting other people.'

'They've implemented telephone triage to all of those places.'

Dr Susan Hopkins, a chief medical adviser of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said more monkeypox cases are being detected on a daily basis.

Speaking to the BBC's Sunday Morning programme, Dr Hopkins said UKHSA will be releasing updated figures on Monday.

She said: 'We will be releasing updated numbers tomorrow - over-the-weekend figures.'

'We are detecting more cases on a daily basis and I'd like to thank all of those people who are coming forward for testing to sexual health clinics, to the GPs and emergency department.'

And asked to confirm reports that someone is being treated for monkeypox in intensive care, she said: 'We don't confirm individual reports and individual patients.'

In Britain, authorities are offering a smallpox vaccine to healthcare workers and others who may have been exposed.

Portugal has 14 confirmed cases and 20 suspected infections. And across the Atlantic, there are two confirmed cases in Canada, with 20 suspected cases.

There are also cases in Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, France, Israel, Switzerland and Australia.

The World Health Organisation said it expects to identify more cases of monkeypox as it expands surveillance in countries where the disease is not typically found.

As of Saturday, 92 confirmed cases and 28 suspected cases of monkeypox have been reported from 12 member states that are not endemic for the virus, the UN agency said, adding it will provide further guidance and recommendations in coming days for countries on how to mitigate the spread of monkeypox.

No one has died of the viral disease to date.

Professor David Heymann, an expert on infectious disease epidemiology at The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said: 'What seems to be happening now is that it has got into the population as a sexual form, as a genital form, and is being spread as are sexually transmitted infections, which has amplified its transmission around the world.'

He said close contact was the key transmission route, as lesions typical of the disease are very infectious.

For example, parents caring for sick children are at risk, as are health workers, which is why some countries have started inoculating teams treating monkeypox patients using vaccines for smallpox, a related virus.

Many of the current cases have been identified at sexual health clinics.

Early genomic sequencing of a handful of the cases in Europe has suggested a similarity with the strain that spread in a limited fashion in Britain, Israel and Singapore in 2018.

Heymann said it was 'biologically plausible' the virus had been circulating outside of the countries where it is endemic, but had not led to major outbreaks as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns, social distancing and travel restrictions.

It comes as it emerged some of the country's top disease experts warned that monkeypox would fill the void left by smallpox three years ago.

Scientists from leading institutions including the University of Cambridge and the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine argued the viral disease would evolve to fill the 'niche' left behind after smallpox was eradicated.

According to the Sunday Telegraph, the experts attended a seminar in London back in 2019 and discussed how there was a need to develop 'a new generation vaccines and treatments'.



	<p>The seminar heard that as smallpox was eradicated in 1980, there has been a cessation of smallpox vaccinations and, as a result, up to 70 per cent of the world's population are no longer protected against smallpox.</p> <p>This means they are also no longer protected against other viruses in the same family such as monkeypox.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Biden terse message for NKorea leader</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/21/politics/joe-biden-south-korea-japan-sunday/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/21/politics/joe-biden-south-korea-japan-sunday/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>SeoulCNN</b> — Before President Joe Biden concluded a visit to South Korea on Sunday, he offered a brief message to the <a href="#">nuclear-armed dictator</a> to the north, who US officials believe could be preparing for a provocation during the US leader’s visit to Asia.</p> <p>“Hello,” Biden said when asked his message for Kim Jong Un. “Period.”</p> <p>The succinct greeting reflected the Biden administration’s so-far-unsuccessful attempts at restarting diplomacy with Pyongyang. Attempts at outreach to the North have gone mostly unanswered. Instead, Kim has intensified missile launches and could be preparing for a seventh underground nuclear test.</p> <p>Biden, who touched down in Tokyo early Sunday evening, said he was prepared for such contingencies to occur during his first trip to Asia.</p> <p>“We are prepared for anything North Korea does. We’ve had — thought through how we’re going to respond to whatever they do. And so I’m not concerned,” Biden said.</p> <p>He was speaking before visiting with some of the nearly 30,000 American service members stationed here as a last stop on his visit to South Korea.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Americans deployed on the Korean Peninsula</a> have long acted as a signal of US military strength in a region made anxious by the nuclear-armed nation to the north. Increasingly, they also act as a reminder of Western muscle in a <a href="#">region heavily influenced by China</a>.</p> <p>Biden observed a joint airspace control center where members of the US and South Korean militaries work alongside each other to monitor airspace made tense by North Korea’s intensifying missile tests.</p> <p>“Our alliance is formed through shared sacrifices of the Korean War and several decades later thanks to you the Republic of Korea is a strong thriving democracy,” Biden told the group, standing near a large screen showing images of the Korean Demilitarized Zone. Biden opted not to visit the DMZ on his visit, unlike his predecessors, because he wanted to see US servicemembers at their base.</p> <p>“All the American troops that are here and your families, thank you for what you do for our country and our allies,” he said. Later, he joined a group of military families for ice cream.</p> <p>Earlier in the day, the President met with Hyundai Motor Group Chairman Chung Euisun in Seoul, where he highlighted \$11 billion in new investments from the Korean automaker, including \$5.5 billion to open a new electric vehicle factory in Savannah, Georgia.</p> <p><a href="#">One of Biden’s primary objectives in visiting Asia</a> this week has been to reaffirm his commitment to two key alliances while also seeking ways to further expand cooperation. He’ll depart South Korea for Japan later in the day, bringing with him a similar message of reassurance that America’s longtime ally in the Pacific can depend on the United States as a reliable security and economic partner.</p> <p>A day earlier, Biden and his South Korean counterpart, President Yoon Suk Yeol, wrote in a joint statement they were open to expanding joint military drills that Biden’s predecessor scaled back, believing</p>

	<p>them too costly and provocative. Biden said cooperation between the two countries demonstrated “our readiness to take on all threats together.”</p> <p>The expanded military exercises will be aimed at ensuring “what it takes to best ensure military readiness and best ensure our ability to work closely together,” a senior administration official said Sunday, though declined to offer a timeline or guidance on the scope of the expanded drills.</p> <p>“Mr. President, your country’s democracy shows the power to be able to deliver for its people,” Biden told Yoon during a toast at the start of a state dinner on Saturday evening. “We’re proud to say, the generals with me today can say as well, that our armed forces stand side by side, standing on a peninsula for seven decades to preserve the peace and make possible that shared prosperity.”</p> <p>He was likely to take a similar message to Japan, which also hosts a sizable population of American service members and maintains a mutual defense treaty with the United States. Increased provocations from North Korea and territorial grabs by China have caused deep concern in the country, which has looked to the US for assurances about its security.</p> <p>Biden is expected to call on Emperor Naruhito at his imperial palace before meeting Monday with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who took office last fall. Later, he’ll unveil the outlines of a trade plan for Asia that officials hope can generate wide support. And he’ll conclude his visit with a summit of the Quad collective — comprised of the United States, Japan, India and Australia — that is widely seen as an attempt to counter China’s military and economic ambitions.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 ‘Operation Fly Formula’ arrives Indianapolis</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/biden-health-indianapolis-00f39fd46778ecdd543c22f3630d79ba">https://apnews.com/article/biden-health-indianapolis-00f39fd46778ecdd543c22f3630d79ba</a>
GIST	<p>INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Enough specialty infant formula for more than half a million baby bottles arrived Sunday in Indianapolis.</p> <p>The formula, weighing 78,000 pounds (35,380 kilograms), was being transported by military plane, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters aboard Air Force One as President Joe Biden flew from South Korea to Japan.</p> <p><a href="#">It is the first of several flights carrying infant formula from Europe</a> expected this weekend to relieve the deepening shortage in the U.S. The flights were authorized by Biden.</p> <p>Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack was in Indianapolis to greet the arrival of the first shipment in Indianapolis.</p> <p>The Biden administration — which has struggled to address a nationwide shortage of formula, particularly hypoallergenic varieties — has dubbed the effort “Operation Fly Formula.” The crisis follows the <a href="#">closure of the nation’s largest domestic manufacturing plant in Michigan in February</a> due to safety issues.</p> <p>The White House has said 132 pallets of Nestlé Health Science Alfamino Infant and Alfamino Junior formula was to leave Ramstein Air Base in Germany for the U.S. Another 114 pallets of Gerber Good Start Extensive HA formula were expected to arrive in the coming days. Altogether, about 1.5 million 8-ounce bottles of the three formulas, which are hypoallergenic for children with cow’s milk protein allergy, are expected to arrive this week.</p> <p>Indianapolis was chosen because it is a Nestle distribution hub. The formula will be offloaded into FedEx semitractor-trailers and taken to a Nestle distribution center about a mile away where the company will do a standard quality control check before distributing the supplies to hospitals, pharmacies and doctor’s offices, according to an administration official on site.</p>

	<p>Air Force planes are transporting the initial batch of formula because no commercial flights were available this weekend.</p> <p>The flight was the first of several to provide “some incremental relief in the coming days” as the government works on a more lasting response to the shortage, Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council, said Sunday.</p> <p>Reese told CNN’s “State of the Union” that Sunday’s flight brought 15% of the specialty medical grade formula needed in the U.S., and because of various actions by the government, people should see “more formula in stores starting as early as this week.”</p> <p>Longer term, he said, the U.S. needs more formula providers “so that no individual company has this much control over supply chains.”</p> <p>Under “Operation Fly Formula,” the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services are authorized to request Department of Defense support to pick up overseas infant formula that meets U.S. health and safety standards, so it can get to store shelves faster, according to the USDA.</p> <p>Alfamino is primarily available through hospitals and home health care companies that serve patients at home.</p> <p>U.S. regulators and the manufacturer, Abbott Nutrition, hope to have its Michigan plant reopened next week, but it will take about two months before product is ready for delivery. The Food and Drug Administration this week eased importation requirements for baby formula to try to ease the supply crunch, which has left store shelves void of some brands and some retailers rationing supply for parents nervous about feeding their children.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/22 Stock market bottom remains elusive</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/stock-market-bottom-remains-elusive-despite-deepening-decline-11653141699?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/stock-market-bottom-remains-elusive-despite-deepening-decline-11653141699?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>U.S. stocks are in the midst of their longest selloff in decades.</p> <p>Whether they are close to bottoming is anyone’s guess.</p> <p>Market selloffs have long stumped strategists trying to predict when they were close to done. Some have concluded with bursts of panicked selling. Others, such as the one lasting from 1973 to 1974, ground to an end after days of <a href="#">subdued trading volumes</a>.</p> <p>Many investors and analysts looking back at historic pullbacks believe that the current slump that has put the S&amp;P 500 on the cusp of a bear market still has a way to go.</p> <p>The index is down 19% from its Jan. 3 record, flirting with the 20% decline that would end the bull market that began in March 2020. This year’s stock selloff, now in its fifth month, has already gone on for far longer than the typical pullback occurring without a recession, according to Deutsche Bank.</p> <p>Yet the Federal Reserve is still in the early stages of its campaign to raise interest rates, meaning that financial conditions will tighten further and put more pressure on stocks in the coming months. Many people are skeptical that the central bank will be able to keep raising rates without tipping the economy into a recession, a period when stocks have typically fallen about 30% going back to 1929, according to Dow Jones Market Data.</p> <p>Data have continued to suggest that this year’s selloff, while painful, hasn’t yet resulted in the type of shifts in investing behavior seen in prior downturns.</p>

Investors continue to have a hefty chunk of their portfolios in the stock market. [Bank of America Corp.](#) said this month that its private clients have an average of 63% of their portfolios dedicated to stocks—far more than after the 2008 financial crisis, when they had just 39% of their portfolios in stocks.

A measure of expected market volatility has remained firmly below levels it breached during prior selloffs. The Cboe Volatility Index, or VIX, jumped well above 40 during the selloffs of March 2020, November 2008 and August 2011. It has yet to close above that level this year.

Investors haven't rushed out of some of the most beaten-down parts of the market. The ARK Innovation exchange-traded fund has pulled in net inflows of \$1.4 billion this year, despite being on track to deliver its worst returns in its history, according to FactSet. Leveraged ETFs that offer investors a way to amplify bullish bets on the Nasdaq-100, as well as semiconductor stocks, have drawn in billions of dollars in inflows this year.

"We still need to shake out the froth from the markets," said Cole Smead, president and portfolio manager of Smead Capital Management.

Like many other investors, Mr. Smead has been trying to identify businesses with attractive valuations that he believes can withstand rising inflation and slowing growth. One company Mr. Smead has been eyeing is Starbucks Corp., whose shares the firm previously owned. But like almost everything else in the stock market, the coffee chain's shares have tumbled this year.

Starbucks shares are down 37%, on course for their worst year since 2008. The S&P 500 is down 18% for the year and posted its seventh straight weekly loss Friday—its longest such streak since 2001.

"Things are going to keep getting worse before they get better," Mr. Smead said.

One reason many investors are cautious right now? Soaring inflation. The Fed is raising interest rates to try to rein in inflation, which earlier this year rose at the fastest pace since the 1980s. It is aiming to pull off a "soft landing"—in other words, slow the economy enough to rein in inflation but avoid tipping the U.S. into a recession.

Many investors fear the central bank won't succeed, based on prior cycles of tightening monetary policy.

Going back to the 1980s, the U.S. slipped into recession four of the six times the Fed kicked off interest rate increase campaigns, according to research from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. This time around, the central bank has the added challenge of trying to bring price increases under control while Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's zero-Covid policy add to supply-chain disruptions and inflationary pressures world-wide.

"There's not a chance in hell that the Fed will be able to crush inflation without significantly impairing domestic demand," said David Rosenberg, president and chief economist at Rosenberg Research.

Mr. Rosenberg added that he believes the markets will have a hard time finding a definitive bottom before the Fed is done tightening monetary policy, or it has convinced investors it is succeeding in bringing inflationary pressures down without risking a recession.

Others note that stocks' declines, while painful, haven't yet reached the severity of prior bear markets yet.

Going back to 1929, the S&P 500 has declined an average of 36% during a bear market, according to data from Ned Davis Research.

The end of the selloff will be "a great buying opportunity, but I don't think that moment will necessarily be here tomorrow," Mr. Smead said.

HEADLINE	05/22 UK monkeypox case detected on daily basis
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/22/more-monkeypox-cases-detected-in-uk-on-daily-basis-says-scientist">https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/22/more-monkeypox-cases-detected-in-uk-on-daily-basis-says-scientist</a>
GIST	<p>More monkeypox cases are being detected in Britain “on a daily basis”, a senior doctor has warned, amid reports that a child has been admitted to intensive care with the disease.</p> <p>Dr Susan Hopkins, a chief medical adviser to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said an update on confirmed cases would be released on Monday as efforts continue to contain the outbreak using contact tracing, testing and vaccination.</p> <p>The number of confirmed cases in the UK rose to 20 on Friday and is expected to climb significantly in the weeks ahead as more people are traced and others come forward for testing. Public health officials are still working to identify the source of the outbreak as many of the patients have no known links to other cases.</p> <p>Monkeypox is a mild disease in most people and resolves without treatment in two to four weeks. But it can be more dangerous in vulnerable people, such as those with weakened immune systems, pregnant women and young children.</p> <p>According to the Sunday Telegraph, the UK cases include a child who is being treated in intensive care in a London hospital. The UKHSA said it did not confirm or discuss information at patient level.</p> <p>The agency confirmed the first case of monkeypox on 7 May, three days after a passenger with symptoms returned to London from Nigeria, a country that has had a large number of cases since 2017. Sexual health clinics have since reported a flurry of cases among men who have sex with men, some of whom developed symptoms weeks earlier.</p> <p>More than 180 confirmed or suspected cases are being investigated in at least 14 countries. More than half are in Spain and Portugal.</p> <p>“We are detecting more cases on a daily basis and I’d like to thank all of those people who are coming forward for testing to sexual health clinics, to the GPs and emergency department,” Dr Hopkins told BBC One’s Sunday Morning. Asked if the virus was spreading in the community in the UK, she said: “Absolutely. We are finding cases that have no identified contact with an individual from west Africa, which is what we’ve seen previously in this country.”</p> <p>Monkeypox was first discovered in monkeys used for research in 1958, but the natural reservoir for the disease is believed to be rodents. The virus is endemic in parts of west and central Africa. Until this year, only seven cases had been detected in the UK, in 2018, 2019 and 2021, and all were linked with travel to Nigeria.</p> <p>“The community transmission is largely centred in urban areas and we are predominantly seeing it in individuals who self-identify as gay or bisexual, or other men who have sex with men,” Hopkins said. Asked why cases were mostly in that group, she said: “That’s because of the frequent close contacts they may have.”</p> <p>“We would recommend to anyone who’s having changes in sex partners regularly, or having close contact with individuals that they don’t know, to come forward if they develop a rash” she added.</p> <p>Monkeypox is not a highly infectious disease and most cases in rural Africa are believed to arise when people come into contact with infected animals. But the disease can spread from person to person through close contact with ulcers and blisters, which often appear around the mouth and genitals; respiratory droplets; and contaminated materials such as bedding, towels and cooking utensils.</p>

The incubation period can be as long as 21 days, meaning symptoms can take three weeks to appear after exposure to the virus, but in the latest outbreak, many patients are developing a rash within days. Patients can develop a fever before other symptoms come on.

To help contain the spread of the virus, high-risk contacts of confirmed cases, including some healthcare workers, have been given shots of a smallpox vaccine, Imvanex, which can protect against monkeypox.

“We’re using it in individuals who we believe are at high risk of developing symptoms and using it early, particularly within four or five days of the case developing symptoms,” Hopkins said.

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HEADLINE	05/22 ‘Everybody’ be concerned on monkeypox
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/22/biden-monkeypox-infections-spread">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/22/biden-monkeypox-infections-spread</a>
GIST	<p>Joe Biden said Sunday that “everybody” should be worried about the spread of monkeypox recently, and his national security adviser assured the public that the US has a “vaccine that is relevant to treating” the virus.</p> <p>During an official visit to South Korea, Biden told reporters, “They haven’t told me the level of exposure yet but it is something that everybody should be concerned about.” The president, who was speaking at Osan airbase, also added: “It is a concern in that if it were to spread it would be consequential.”</p> <p>Initially, Biden said the government was exploring what vaccine “if any might be available” to protect people against the virus. But later his national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the US had a “vaccine available to be deployed” against the monkeypox virus if necessary.</p> <p>Federal Centers for Disease Control officials have previously said that people who are exposed to monkeypox, which has a slow incubation period, can be given existing smallpox vaccines to limit the sickness’ severity.</p> <p>Biden’s first remarks on the growing outbreak of the rare virus came a day after a senior adviser for the World Health Organization said the monkeypox seemed to be spreading through sexual contact and admonished that case numbers could continue climbing over the summer as people attended festivals and other major gatherings.</p> <p>“What seems to be happening now is that it has got into the population as a sexual form, as a genital form, and is being spread, as are sexually transmitted infections, which has amplified its transmission around the world,” said the WHO adviser, David Heymann.</p> <p>Entering Sunday, public health authorities had confirmed about 80 cases in nine European countries, along with the US, Canada and Australia. Another 50 cases were suspected infections awaiting confirmation.</p> <p>In the US, Massachusetts health officials confirmed the first case of the disease in that state on Wednesday. That patient had recently traveled to Canada.</p> <p>A New York City resident later in the week tested positive for the virus which causes monkeypox, with the federal Centers for Disease Control on Saturday still investigating whether the illness was present.</p> <p>The virus comes from wild animals, including rodents and primates, but can occasionally transfer to humans – with most of those cases traced to central and west Africa. It can cause fever, body aches, chills and fatigue, and it occasionally shows up in the US, including last year in a couple of people who had just traveled to Nigeria.</p> <p>People with severe cases can also develop rash and pus-filled lesions on the face, palms of the hands and other body parts.</p>



	<p>The virus doesn't spread easily between people, but transmission can occur through contact with body fluids, monkeypox sores, touching clothing or bedding that have been contaminated with fluids or sores, or through respiratory droplets during prolonged face-to-face contact.</p> <p>Health officials have made it a point to say that the monkeypox is harder to spread – and therefore easier to contain – than Covid-19.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Russia bans 963 Americans from entering</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/russia-bans-963-americans-entry">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/russia-bans-963-americans-entry</a>
GIST	<p>Russia on Saturday released a list of 963 Americans it said were banned from entering the country, a punctuation of previously announced moves against president <a href="#">Joe Biden</a> and other senior US officials.</p> <p>The country, which has received global condemnation for its 24 February invasion of Ukraine, said it would continue to retaliate against what it called hostile US actions, Reuters reported.</p> <p>The lifetime bans imposed on the Americans, including Secretary of State <a href="#">Antony Blinken</a>, US Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and CIA head William Burns, are largely symbolic.</p> <p>They came on the same day Biden signed a support package providing nearly \$40bn (£32bn) in aid for Ukraine.</p> <p>But the latest action by <a href="#">Russia</a> forms part of a downward spiral in the country's relations with the west since its invasion of Ukraine, which prompted Washington and allies to impose drastic sanctions on Moscow and step up arms supplies to Ukraine's military.</p> <p>Several on the Russian government's <a href="#">list of undesirables</a> wouldn't have been able to make the trip anyway: they are already dead.</p> <p>John McCain, the former Republican US presidential candidate and long-serving senator; Democrat Harry Reid, who served as senate majority leader from 2007 to 2015; and Orrin Hatch, whose 42 years in the chamber made him the longest-serving Republican senator in history; are all included.</p> <p>McCain died in August 2018 at the age of 81; Reid died last December, aged 82; and Hatch died on 23 April at 88.</p> <p>Notably, Donald Trump, who as president from 2017 to 2021 sought a close relationship with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, is absent from the ban list.</p> <p>Others who are still very much alive, but now banned from Russia for perceived slights against Putin or his regime, are the actor Morgan Freeman, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, British journalist and CNN correspondent Nick Paton Walsh, and Jeffrey Katzenberg, chief executive of the DreamWorks animation studio.</p> <p><a href="#">Last month</a>, Russia's foreign ministry banned Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, Ben Wallace and 10 other British government members from entering the country.</p> <p>The ministry said the decision was made "in view of the unprecedented hostile action by the UK government".</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 More renters overcharged for damages?</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/more-washington-renters-are-being-overcharged-for-damages-advocates-say-and-theres-little-tenants-can-do-about-it/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/more-washington-renters-are-being-overcharged-for-damages-advocates-say-and-theres-little-tenants-can-do-about-it/</a>
GIST	<p>As a single mother of four kids, losing her apartment was hard enough for Natasha Pabon. But then came another brutal blow: \$3,500 in charges from the property manager for damages and other fees.</p> <p>It was a cost that 35-year-old Pabon — evicted over a conflict her daughter had with a neighbor — could not afford. Not only was she having to forfeit her \$1,155 security deposit, but the property manager at Fern Ridge apartments in Olympia was charging her for things she didn't think she should have to cover, like replacing blinds and painting cabinets. She was particularly upset that she was charged \$300 for "general cleaning" even though Pabon, who works as a cleaner, knew the place was spotless. The manager also charged her nearly \$900 in attorneys fees, according to documents Pabon provided to InvestigateWest, despite nothing having been filed in court.</p> <p>Fern Ridge did not return a message seeking comment.</p> <p>But Pabon has few options to make her case that these fees are unreasonable. Housing providers and landlords argue the current system in Washington largely works as intended, allowing disputes to be resolved in small-claims courts.</p> <p>That route would require Pabon to make time to file a complaint and attend a hearing. Then, she must argue convincingly — likely for the first time — against a landlord or housing company.</p> <p>"It's just ridiculous how this all just transpired," Pabon said. "They want to evict you and then they want to put you in an even worse situation."</p> <p>Tenant advocates argue that Washington's law doesn't adequately protect tenants from unreasonable damage charges that saddle them with debt and stymie their efforts to find a new place to live. They tried in the last legislative session to change state law to better clarify what landlords can charge for, but were unsuccessful.</p> <p>But they say there's urgency to protect renters from such charges, particularly now in a perfect storm of low vacancy rates and rising evictions now that a two-year moratorium has expired.</p> <p>This April, 126 evictions were filed in King County — a nearly 1,400% increase over the eight filings in April 2020.</p> <p>Terri Anderson, statewide policy director for the Tenants Union of Washington, said the issue is one of the most common the group's tenant hotline receives. And Scott Crain, an attorney with the nonprofit Northwest Justice Project, which provides free legal assistance to tenants, says it hears from renters dealing with what they feel are unreasonable damage charges "all the time."</p> <p>"People really don't get their deposit back these days," Crain says. "It's a real, problematic statewide issue for renters."</p> <p><b>Defining "wear and tear"</b></p> <p>Once tenants move out, housing providers in Washington have 21 days to return the deposit. If they are withholding part of it or asking to recover damage costs exceeding the deposit amount, they must provide a "full and specific" statement explaining why, per the state's Residential Landlord-Tenant Act. They cannot charge tenants for "normal wear and tear resulting from ordinary use of the premises."</p> <p>But the "normal wear and tear" standard isn't explicitly defined in state law. That can create confusion between landlords and renters, said Sarah Nagy, a staff attorney at Columbia Legal Services.</p> <p>Do scuffs on the carpet meet that definition? What about dirty drip pans, or burnt-out lightbulbs?</p>

The lack of clarity in Washington, Nagy argued, opens the door for bad actors to take advantage of low-income tenants.

“It’s completely up to any given landlord to determine themselves what’s the legitimate claim for damage,” Nagy said. “And you have to go to a third-party adjudicator like a small claims court to get any clarity on that.”

Going to small-claims court, however, is a time-consuming barrier for many renters. Even though attorneys aren’t allowed in small-claims court, renters can feel outgunned if going up against a landlord or property management company in front of a judge.

Crain, with Northwest Justice Project, said he has a hard time advising renters to fight unreasonable charges in court because “everyone has a different definition” of wear and tear.

“You can’t predict what happens when you go to court, which is one of the failures of the law,” Crain says. “You want predictability.”

But if the tenant is unable to pay, the other option isn’t much better. If the housing provider sends the damage costs to collections, it can severely hamper a renter’s ability to find new housing, since it would appear on any routine credit check.

Of course, some renters do successfully fight questionable charges in court. Still, the experience can weigh heavily on them.

Robert Elon Mix, a 70-year-old Vietnam veteran who has diabetes, had been evicted and was homeless when a \$5,000 bill for damages to his former apartment was sent to a collections agency. The apartment complex he had lived in had changed ownership and wouldn’t allow Mix to pay rent in two separate checks, based on when he received his Social Security and Veterans Affairs benefits.

“Not a day went by when I didn’t get some type of crap from these people,” Mix said.

Mix contacted Crain, who helped him win a case that saw the damage charges reduced to zero after arguing the company discriminated against Crain based on his disability.

But losing his housing, being harassed by debt collectors and battling in court brought back Mix’s depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, which he’d long battled since Vietnam.

“And it hasn’t gotten any better,” he said.

### **Bill fails in Legislature**

Mix was one of several people who testified in favor of House Bill 1300, introduced in 2021 by Rep. My-Linh Thai, D-Bellevue, aimed at preventing landlords from billing tenants for unreasonable damages.

The bill clarified “normal wear and tear” as any damages due to aging or deterioration caused by simply living, and it specified that deposits generally cannot be withheld for things like carpet cleaning or replacing light fixtures, equipment, appliances and furnishings if their condition had not been documented at the start of tenancy. It also calls for landlords to provide receipts of any work they are charging tenants for.

“The effect would be to clarify what a landlord can charge for before the parties are forced to take on the time and expense of small claims court,” says Nagy, with Columbia Legal Services.

But HB 1300 has gone nowhere in each of the last two legislative sessions. Initially, housing providers strongly objected to other aspects of the bill that they thought were impractical, such as a provision requiring a walk-through assessing damages shortly before the move-out date because furniture or wall hangings present during an inspection could hide damage.

	<p>“Rep. Thai’s proposal presents logistical challenges and ultimately creates the potential for a contentious parting of ways between landlord and tenant when there otherwise is a good relationship,” said Cory Brewer, vice president of residential operations for Windermere Property Management, who testified against the bill.</p> <p>Pabon, the tenant in Olympia, found a new place, but she had to pay a higher security deposit because of the damage charges from her previous tenancy.</p> <p>That, combined with the application fees, completely drained her savings.</p> <p>“It just means you have nothing at the end of this,” Pabon said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Lynnwood urban growth spurs debate</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/sitting-on-a-gold-mine-as-change-comes-to-lynnwood-urban-growth-spurs-debate/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/sitting-on-a-gold-mine-as-change-comes-to-lynnwood-urban-growth-spurs-debate/</a>
GIST	<p>LYNNWOOD — When Phong Nguyen’s parents opened a furniture store 24 years ago, they had no idea that a light-rail station would be built down the block, that the surrounding strip malls would be rezoned for high-rises and that the Puget Sound region would grow by more than 1 million people.</p> <p>They just wanted to sell couches and dining sets.</p> <p>But Lynnwood <a href="#">is evolving</a>, says Nguyen, who now runs the store and lives minutes away. The station is scheduled for completion in 2024, thousands of apartments are sprouting and local politicians are agonizing over whether to welcome thousands more to this sleepy suburb north of Seattle.</p> <p><a href="#">In a meeting last month</a>, one City Council member warned against “too much housing,” while another reminded his colleagues that a busy, walkable core is what many constituents “have long asked for.” The debate matters partly because the region’s taxpayers are investing \$3.1 billion to add light rail from <a href="#">Northgate to Lynnwood</a>, with a \$5.7 billion extension to Everett also planned. Respondents to a recent <a href="#">Sound Transit survey</a> about a site the agency controls next to the station requested mixed-income, family-size apartments and shops there.</p> <p>Nguyen, 44, who’s volunteered with Lynnwood’s food bank and police department, says the burgeoning “<a href="#">City Center</a>” area could become a satellite for tech jobs, especially with hybrid work. In the meantime, real estate developers are sniffing around Anna’s Home Furnishings, located on 1.28 acres that the Nguyens own. The family could make a deal, or stay put and sell beds to the apartment dwellers moving in.</p> <p>Either way, Nguyen believes, “We’re sitting on a gold mine.”</p> <p>The changes accelerating in Lynnwood, population 39,000, are like those occurring in <a href="#">many communities</a> where Sound Transit is expanding service. Though <a href="#">Bellevue</a> and <a href="#">Redmond</a> on the Eastside are years ahead, Snohomish County cities must also add jobs and apartments to help address the climate crisis and housing crunch, said Josh Brown, executive director of the Puget Sound Regional Council, which has determined that about 70% of growth <a href="#">through 2050</a> should happen along transit corridors.</p> <p>Some characteristics set Lynnwood apart. Situated where Interstate 5 and Interstate 405 converge, it grew in the 1960s and 1970s into a car-centric shopping destination, with Alderwood mall opening in 1979. Furniture stores clustered nearby, which is why Nguyen’s parents, refugees from Vietnam, started their business in the area.</p> <p>After college, Nguyen had a career in Silicon Valley. He returned in 2005, as Lynnwood’s leaders began planning a metamorphosis. They rezoned 250 acres for buildings <a href="#">up to 350 feet tall</a>, <a href="#">envisioning</a> people of</p>

all ages living and working above restaurants, boutiques and pubs. At the same time, they vowed to preserve outlying neighborhoods for houses with yards.

The planning continued after voters in 2008 approved Lynnwood's light-rail extension, which will carry passengers to downtown Seattle in 28 minutes. Still, the city's population grew just 8% from 2010 to 2020. Only now does development at last appear to be ramping up, stirring excitement and anxiety.

### **"Growth pain"**

Back in 2012, Lynnwood's leaders passed legislation that preapproved environmental reviews for certain City Center projects, in an attempt to save time and entice developers. They also set limits on growth, capping the preapprovals at 3,000 housing units and capping overall construction in the area at about 9 million square feet.

Those thresholds were based on 20-year projections, but more than 3,200 units already have been built, are under construction or are planned, according to Karl Almgren, Lynnwood's City Center manager. Another 1,000 are open or coming soon at Alderwood, [wedged beside the mall](#).

City Center today is a work in progress. The developer behind its most important project — a huge complex called [Northline Village](#) — is still looking for partners and has yet to break ground, Almgren said during a stroll past boarded-up windows and empty parking lots. But you can imagine what's possible, he said, pointing down 198th Street Southwest, which is slated to be rebuilt [as a promenade](#) lined with businesses like cafes that the city is requiring developers to include on certain blocks.

"These sidewalks are going to be 16 feet wide," said Almgren, who recently presented [a proposal](#) that would lift the preapproval cap to 6,000 units and eliminate the cap on overall development.

Leaving the current limits intact could discourage builders and stunt City Center's metamorphosis, he said at an April 25 City Council meeting ([first covered by The Urbanist](#)) that flared after a public commenter railed against the proposed adjustment.

"How many units do we need ... before somebody says stop?" former Councilmember Ted Hikel asked, suggesting more growth would strain public services like police and could "destroy the city by turning it into another Seattle, turning it into another Ballard."

Boosters like ex-Mayor Nicola Smith, who retired last year, say dense housing can create a vibrant environment in which to "live, work and play" — and generate tax revenue. Lynnwood needs gathering places, agreed Zera Mahangel, waiting to meet his nephew at a Starbucks on 196th Street Southwest packed with people tapping on laptops and chatting.

"Sometimes I see older people hanging out (at the food court) in the mall," because there aren't many other options, said Mahangel, 66.

Yet multiple council members echoed Hikel. Lynnwood is already "doing our part" growth-wise, Shannon Sessions said, and a 6,000-unit target would do "absolutely nothing" for existing residents, Jim Smith added.

"This will increase traffic. This will increase crime," without advancing affordability, he said, arguing developers would be the "real winners."

"There's no mandate that Lynnwood has to accommodate every person who wants to move to the Pacific Northwest," said Patrick Decker.

Across the council dais, Josh Binda shared mixed thoughts and George Hurst signaled support for the proposal, clouding the political picture ahead of a vote that's been postponed.

There are real concerns, said Binda, who along with Decker was elected last year. Nonetheless, “People are going to come to Lynnwood. We’re going to need more housing,” he added.

The city can adapt, Hurst said. Major improvements to streets and sidewalks are underway. A “town square” park is planned. A creek will be daylighted by the light-rail station.

“We’re in the growth pain portion of this,” Hurst said.

### **“Something spectacular”**

Raja Akhter understands the pros and cons better than most, said the business owner, whose store across from the light-rail station sells South Asian, Middle Eastern and Mexican groceries. Two years ago, Sound Transit said JD’s Market would have to move, panicking Akhter, he recalled.

The agency wanted access to the store’s parking spots to offset spots lost during light-rail work at Lynnwood’s bus terminal, Sound Transit spokesperson John Gallagher said. JD’s was going to have to move eventually anyway, to make way for Northline Village.

The store snagged new digs close by and Sound Transit has paid \$700,000 in relocation assistance so far, with the process slowed at times by due-diligence steps, Gallagher said. But the agency hasn’t used the parking spots yet and JD’s has been stuck paying double rent while renovating its new location and wrangling with Sound Transit over reimbursements, said manager Mohamed Elshabik.

“They keep delaying, delaying,” Akhter said.

Even so, Akhter is bullish on Lynnwood. Assuming JD’s survives, he expects new residents and light-rail riders to bolster his diverse customer base. Almost two-thirds white in 2010, the city’s residents were almost half people of color by 2020.

Some people moving to City Center are newcomers and others, like Evan Primm, have local roots. Primm, 28, works for Edmonds School District and rents a 2-bedroom apartment at a building called Kinect@Lynnwood that opened a few months ago.

“My parents live pretty close. I grew up here,” he said. “Long term, the challenge is saving for a house.”

Lynnwood’s new units could attract bargain seekers from Seattle, though Primm and his roommate pay plenty: \$2,135 per month. Rents for older, low-rise apartments near the light-rail station are bound to increase, said Carrie Siemering, who moved to the Collins Junction complex “because it was the most affordable I could find.” By the time City Center becomes trendy, “I’ll be gone,” predicted Siemering, 54, who works two jobs to cover her \$1,500 monthly rent.

Matthew Gardner, chief economist at Windermere Real Estate, doesn’t expect to see development above 12 stories in City Center anytime soon. High-rises are still cost-prohibitive in a market like Lynnwood, he said.

But the area has the right “bones” for lots of growth, Gardner said, and Lynnwood should “be bold,” added Brown from the Regional Council, because bus-rapid transit lines will speed passengers to Mill Creek and the Eastside starting in 2024 and 2027, respectively, and because City Center’s strip malls can be redeveloped without directly displacing residents. Nguyen has lobbied for smoother business permitting.

Nicola Smith, the ex-mayor, said she worries that “NIMBY-ish” politics may stall Lynnwood’s nascent momentum. Whereas Nguyen, who stands to gain as much as anyone, is undaunted. When he talks to local leaders, he tells them City Center could be studded with rooftop gathering spaces, boasting panoramic views. He says, “We have the opportunity to do something spectacular here.”

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/more-horrors-await-after-550-billion-retail-earnings-meltdown-1.1768864">https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/more-horrors-await-after-550-billion-retail-earnings-meltdown-1.1768864</a>
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Soaring costs and swollen inventories have retailers on the ropes, and investors fear that the punishment won't ease anytime soon.</p> <p>With companies from Costco Wholesale Corp. to Dollar General Corp. and Best Buy Co. set to report earnings next week, investors are bracing for more bad news after a disastrous few days that sent giants like Walmart Inc. and Target Corp. to their worst stock-price drops since 1987.</p> <p>In all, some \$550 billion in market value was erased from consumer stocks over the past five days, adding to the downward pressure on a market already strained by fear of inflation and rising interest rates. On Friday, the S&amp;P 500 -- weighed down by the heavy losses in its consumer sectors -- briefly dipped into bear-market territory, a 20% decline from its most recent high.</p> <p>"This week has been an absolute bloodbath for retail," said Neil Saunders, an analyst at GlobalData Plc. "To a certain extent, I think that's the rebalancing of expectations, and people seeing more crimp on profit."</p> <p>Part of the problem is that stores are awash in products that consumers don't want. At the same time, the cost of finding new goods to sell and getting them into stores is surging as fuel, labor and other expenses climb. Walmart and Target both slashed their forecasts for profit this year as inventories ballooned and price increases failed to keep up with rising costs.</p> <p>That has investors on edge over how other companies might hold up. Dollar General and Dollar Tree Inc. are each set to report on Thursday, days after being swamped in the selloff that took down Target. There is also unease over long-struggling department stores -- Nordstrom Inc. reports Tuesday and Macy's Inc. is slated for Thursday -- as well as specialty chains such as Best Buy and Dick's Sporting Goods Inc. Costco, also on Thursday, is the largest retailer on the docket for next week.</p> <p>Here is more on some of the key issues facing US retailers right now:</p> <p>Costs</p> <p>Walmart and Target are seen as some of the savviest supply-chain managers in the business, and they've been contending with disruptions since the pandemic began. Even so, they were caught flat-footed when oil prices surged after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>More retailers will likely be forced to cut their forecasts to account for increases in fuel and freight costs, which show no sign of abating soon, Saunders said. Price hikes won't be able to cover the full brunt of this challenge, he said.</p> <p>Spending Patterns</p> <p>The rising cost of everything is forcing shoppers to make tough decisions. While overall US retail sales remain robust, Walmart and Target both said more customers are trading down to cheaper, private-label groceries.</p> <p>"The needs are squeezing out the wants," said Michael Baker, an analyst at D.A. Davidson.</p> <p>A shift to more bargain-focused shopping could bode well for Dollar Tree and Dollar General. At the same time, upscale retailers like Nordstrom will be watched closely to see if there are more signs that well-heeled consumers are keeping up their spending while others turn cautious.</p> <p>Another watch item: the weather. Walmart and Target blamed damp, chilly conditions in early spring for crimping sales in certain categories. That could be a problem for apparel sellers such as Gap Inc., Urban Outfitters Inc. and Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Co., which also report next week.</p>



	<p>Inventories</p> <p>Shipping delays and backlogs were so bad last year that Walmart and Target chartered cargo ships to keep their shelves stocked. That worked for a while, but this year inventories are getting out of hand.</p> <p>The retailers now find themselves flush with clothes, televisions and other discretionary items that customers aren't buying as they channel more spending into basic needs and services. As a result, the companies took markdowns that eroded profits.</p> <p>It's possible that Costco dodged some of that pressure since its narrower range of items gives it more flexibility, said Jennifer Bartashus, an analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence.</p> <p>"We're going to be thinking a lot more about inventory and the markdown risk that may be associated with inventory," Bartashus said. "That will be an overhang for earnings next week, and it will be an overhang later into the year as well."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 US 'shock' \$5trillion wealth plunge</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://uk.news.yahoo.com/5-trillion-wealth-shock-cracking-132734925.html">https://uk.news.yahoo.com/5-trillion-wealth-shock-cracking-132734925.html</a>
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- The world's richest nation is waking up to an unpleasant and unfamiliar sensation: It's getting poorer.</p> <p>Americans' collective net worth had been climbing at a dizzying rate for the past two years, even as families and businesses contended with the ravages of Covid-19. Households piled up an extra \$38.5 trillion from early 2020 to the end of last year, bringing their collective net worth to a record \$142 trillion, the Federal Reserve estimates.</p> <p>Just as the US is learning to live with the virus and spending shifts back toward pre-pandemic normal, it faces a new scary threat: A plunge in wealth since the start of 2022 that JPMorgan Chase &amp; Co. estimates totals at least \$5 trillion -- and could reach \$9 trillion by year-end.</p> <p>So far, the richest Americans have borne the brunt, with US billionaire fortunes down almost \$800 billion since their peak amid the sharp losses in stocks, crypto and other financial assets. But surging interest rates are also starting to rattle the housing market, where middle- and working-class families have the bulk of their wealth.</p> <p>It all adds up to the sudden removal of a major prop to confidence: ever-bigger nest eggs. And it's by design. To stamp out the highest inflation in decades, the Fed needs Americans to curb their spending, even if it requires an economic slowdown to get there.</p> <p>"It's painful to get back to normal after really being in a fantasy world last year," said John Norris, chief economist at Oakworth Capital Bank. "It's going to feel a lot worse than it actually is."</p> <p>Since the start of the year, the S&amp;P 500 Index is down 18%, the Nasdaq 100 has lost 27% and a Bloomberg index of cryptocurrencies has plunged 48%.</p> <p>That all amounts to "a wealth shock that is set to drag on growth in the coming year," JPMorgan economists led by Michael Feroli wrote in a note Friday.</p> <p>Fed Chair Jerome Powell and his colleagues have repeatedly said they're actively aiming for such a slowdown, leaving it unlikely policy makers will move to address the Great Wealth Drop of 2022.</p> <p>Read More: Fed to Plow Ahead on Half-Point Hikes, Undeterred by Stock Slump</p>



Billionaires were the biggest winners of 2020 and 2021. Now they're losing more than almost everyone else. The Bloomberg Billionaires Index, a daily measure of the wealth of the world's 500 richest people, has dropped \$1.6 trillion since its peak in November.

Leading the way are the Americans on the index, who have lost \$797 billion since their peak. Perhaps the most humbled by it all is the world's richest person, Elon Musk. He's lost \$139.1 billion, or 41% of his wealth, since November, when his net worth briefly surpassed \$340 billion. Amazon.com Inc. founder Jeff Bezos, the second-richest person, lost \$82.7 billion, or 39% of his peak wealth.

While the wealth losses among the top 0.001% reduce inequality, that won't be much comfort to most people who worry about the U.S.'s widening disparities.

"In a relative sense, it's going to make the inequity a little lower -- but in an absolute sense, everyone suffers," said Reena Aggarwal, director of Georgetown University's Psaros Center for Financial Markets and Policy.

Like many, Aggarwal is concerned that falling markets will create problems for the broader economy. "Some correction was needed but this is a pretty huge correction, and it's not stopping."

A downturn in housing -- made likely by a surge in mortgage rates to the highest since 2009 -- threatens wider reverberations. Over the last decade, the robust real estate market added \$18 trillion in market value to owner-occupied home valuations.

US spending has been lifted in recent years by owners tapping the enhanced values of their homes for cash. The practice of home equity extraction likely came to a halt this year. More than 40% of refinancings in the final quarter of last year saw homeowners pull cash out of their homes.

Real estate is far more evenly distributed than financial wealth. The top 1% owns more than half of U.S. holdings of stocks and mutual funds, and the bottom 90% owns less than 12%, according to Federal Reserve estimates. By contrast, in real estate the bottom 90% owns more than half of the total, while the top 1% holds less than 14%.

"Higher home prices and sharply higher mortgage rates have reduced buyer activity," Lawrence Yun, National Association of Realtors chief economist, said in a statement Thursday. "It looks like more declines are imminent in the upcoming months."

What Bloomberg's Economists Say...

While the plunging stock market will dent consumers' net worth this year, the residual effect of last year's surge in asset values -- and the resilience in home prices so far this year -- are major offsetting factors supporting consumption. As a result, personal spending is expected to grow faster this year than before the pandemic, even after the removal of fiscal stimulus.

-- Yelena Shulyatyeva, economist

It could take a while before Americans realize that their pandemic home-price gains have evaporated. Even the stock market selloff could take a while to translate into spending in a way that could tip the U.S. into recession.

"A general selloff in the equity market may have a dampening effect," said Chris Gaffney, president of world markets at TIAA Bank, but there's a lag for investors. "They look at their statements on a quarterly basis and all of a sudden they say, 'Oh my goodness, my stock-market portfolio is down 20%, maybe I shouldn't take that vacation,' or 'Maybe I shouldn't buy that larger TV or a new car.'"

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/22/europe/ukraine-russia-war-environment-intl-cmd/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/22/europe/ukraine-russia-war-environment-intl-cmd/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>The pine forests around Irpin are Oleh Bondarenko's happy place. He discovered them as a child, when his mom sent him to the area for summer camp, and he has been coming back ever since.</p> <p>"It's a place full of memories. Vorzel, Irpin, Bucha, the forests, the fresh air. For me, this is a place of respite," the 64-year-old environmental scientist told CNN during a recent trip to Irpin.</p> <p>The hour-long journey from Kyiv – a trip he has made many times over the decades – was filled with anguish for Bondarenko, who worried what he would find in Irpin. "This is the first time I am coming back since our brothers 'visited' Irpin," he said, referring to Russian troops.</p> <p>This area was under Russian control for several weeks in March; it has subsequently become known around the world as the site of some of the worst atrocities committed by Russia in this war. At least 1,200 bodies of civilians have been discovered in the region since Russian troops withdrew from there, according to the Kyiv region police. At least 290 of them were found in Irpin, according to the city's mayor.</p> <p>In addition to the human toll, the destruction Russian forces caused to the landscape here is brutal and omnipresent: Scorched earth, forest floors ravaged by missiles, and trees broken down and uprooted, while abandoned military equipment litters the ground. Many of the town's neat houses lie in ruins; the woodland and green spaces around them are off limits.</p> <p>Anzhelika Kolomicc, Bondarenko's friend who lives in Irpin, told CNN the authorities have banned people from going into the woods. "We have a beautiful forest here, but this year there won't be any walks, there won't be any mushroom picking, there won't be berries. We are not allowed to go in because of mines and unexploded missiles," she said.</p> <p>While the world's eyes are focused on the human suffering brought about by Russia's invasion, environmental experts in Ukraine are keeping a close record of the environmental damage it has caused, to try to repair it as soon as possible, and in hopes of extracting reparations.</p> <p>The mined and destroyed forest in Irpin is just one example of the environmental damage caused by Russia's war on Ukraine.</p> <p>Satellite images show large swaths of eastern and southern Ukraine are currently engulfed in wildfires sparked by explosions and made worse by the fact that emergency services, forest management workers and the army are unable to get to them. The smoke from the fires is polluting the air.</p> <p>Ukraine's fertile soil is becoming contaminated with heavy metals and other potentially poisonous substances leaking from missiles, military equipment and spent ammunition.</p> <p>Spilled fuel is polluting ground waters and ecosystems are being hammered by tanks and other heavy technology. All of this is damage that will be felt for decades after the war ends.</p> <p>Most people may not see nature as a priority, at least not right now, when Ukraine's future is at stake and people are dying every day amid the conflict.</p> <p>"When you see the crimes against humanity, the unbelievable atrocities, people being killed, tortured, raped, hundreds of them ... it is natural not to think about environmental impacts," said Natalia Gozak, executive director of the Center for Environmental Initiatives in Kyiv.</p> <p>"So it's our task to pay attention and ensure that these types of crimes are also considered as a crime and that the Russians pay for everything – not only for killing people, but also for killing our future and impacting our future wellbeing."</p> <p><b>Gathering evidence</b></p>

Bondarenko took part in the battle for Kyiv in March. He and his son joined the Territorial Defense Force – the mostly volunteer section of Ukraine’s armed forces – in the first days of the war.

He has now been released from duty because of his age and is slowly returning to his environmental work. He wants Ukraine to be ready to start rebuilding in a smart, sustainable way when the war ends.

“We are faced with a much larger crisis now and have to put everything else aside, although I think very soon we will return to the environmental agenda and we have to start thinking about that now,” he said.

Experts like Bondarenko and Gozak are also trying to raise awareness of the risks stemming from the environmental damage.

Bondarenko is a nuclear physicist by training and has spent a large part of his career working on environmental safety in the Chernobyl zone. The risk of nuclear pollution is high on everyone’s mind after Russian troops entered Chernobyl and targeted Europe’s largest nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine.

Wim Zwijnenburg, the leader of the Humanitarian Disarmament Project at PAX, a Dutch peace organization, said international organizations are starting to pay more attention to the environmental damage caused by armed conflicts.

“What we saw in Iraq and Syria is that environmental pollution caused by the war can pose acute risks to the health of people,” he said.

“But no one was paying attention to it. Everyone thought the environment is something you know, for ‘tree huggers’ and people who like bees and butterflies, but then the reality on the ground was that people, and particularly children, can be exposed to toxic remnants of war, all kinds of chemical materials from bombs and factories, or other kinds of hazardous chemicals.”

Because of these past experiences, environmental scientists and humanitarian organizations have started building and using databases of sites that are known to contain hazardous materials.

Now, when they receive information about an attack, they can crosscheck the database to estimate an impact on the surrounding ecosystems.

The Center for Environmental Initiatives has built an interactive map of incidents across Ukraine, breaking them down by the type of damage, including nuclear and chemical pollution, dangerous livestock waste and degradation of land and marine ecosystems.

“During these massive attacks, tons of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, including uranium, get into the soil,” said Olena Kravchenko, executive director of Environment People Law, an environmental think tank in Lviv.

She said the huge amounts of missiles, explosives and other types of weapons and discarded military technology used in war are not the only cause of pollution. Mass burials conducted without consideration for environmental safety can also cause long-term ground water and soil contamination. Ukraine has accused Russia of burying bodies in hastily dug mass graves to cover up war crimes.

The shared monitoring system can also help set priorities in situations where resources are extremely limited.

“Most environmental damage can be addressed after the conflict, but there’s that 5 to 10% where you need to send in experts because there are certain types of chemicals where you need experts to clean it up and not people who don’t know so much about it,” Zwijnenburg said.

Sometimes, the damage may not be immediately obvious.

When the Ukrainian army shot down a Russian missile flying over the Kremenets district in western Ukraine last month, some of the debris fell on an agricultural facility, according to the Ternopil Regional State Administration.

The impact site was cleaned up within a few hours, but the poisonous substances that leaked during the incident lingered in the soil and water for days, according to State Ecological Inspectorate of Polissya District.

People in the surrounding villages were told not to drink water from their wells and a few days after the incident, dead fish were reportedly discovered in a river several miles away.

When the State Ecological Inspectorate of Polissya District measured the ammonium levels in the river it found that they were 163 times higher than what is considered safe.

Animal populations, too, are suffering as a result of the conflict. Experts say the unique habitats on the coast of the Azov Sea in southern Ukraine are being irreparably degraded as Russia continues to pound the area with missiles and bombs.

Precious perennial forests and salt marshes in the Kinburn Spit Reserve in the Mykolaiv region were on fire for more than a week, its unique habitats were left devastated, according to Zinovi Petrovich, the head of Kinburn Spit Reserve.

Petrovich told CNN that the fires were sparked by exploding rockets; he said continued shelling in the area makes it difficult to extinguish the fires. “Another reason is a lack of equipment and the shortage of fuel for firetrucks,” he said.

The Tuzly Lagoons National Nature Park near Odesa is usually a haven for dozens of bird species that go there to nest. This year, most weren’t able to do that, Ivan Rusiev, a biologist and the head of the scientific department of the park, told CNN.

Rusiev estimates Russian troops have dropped around 200 bombs on the park.

“All living beings feel the impact of this aggressive war,” he said, adding that the few birds that have managed to have chicks are now unable to feed them properly. The area is famous for its white and dalmatian pelicans, Rusiev said, with a peacetime population of about 1,500. “Now there are only a handful of birds,” he said.

Rusiev said that the sudden increase in warship and submarine numbers in the Black Sea is causing further harm. “We found dead dolphins on the shore killed by the low frequency sonars,” he said.

### **Hoping for reparations**

Environmental scientists and activists are already gathering evidence of the damage inflicted on nature by the war, hoping to use it in the future.

“When we triumphantly defeat [the Russians], we will be able to count the real damage and present it to the barbarians who treacherously attacked us,” Rusiev said.

An environmental NGO, Save Dnipro, has built a chatbot – software that simulates human-to-human conversation – to make it easier to access data on pollution and to report suspected environmental war crimes. They are compiling the list and factchecking against open sources, but the verification and proper investigation will be up to the authorities.

But getting war reparations for ecological damage is a tall order. Zwijnenburg said that under current international law, the bar is “really high.”

“To reach the threshold where governments can be held accountable for environmental damage, it needs to be severe, long-term damage to the environment before you can actually say it’s a war crime. And the only time this bar or the threshold has been crossed was in 1991, when Iraq set fire to hundreds of oil wells in Kuwait,” he said.

The United Nations Compensation Commission ordered Iraq to pay Kuwait roughly \$3 billion for the environmental damage it caused during the 1990 invasion as part of its \$52.4 billion war reparations package.

Many activists are also worried about further damage being caused unnecessarily in the name of the war effort.

An investigation conducted by the European Union in 2017 and 2018 into Ukraine’s forestry sector said its forest control system was “not functioning properly.” That report, published in 2020, found that evidence from the ground “points to a culture of widespread corruption and illegal logging.”

Ukrainian national watchdogs have largely suspended their environmental protection work because of the war. Kravchenko told CNN that could lead to national resources being exploited.

“We know Ukrainian foresters are cutting down the forest and the explanation is that it’s for the needs of the army. But is it for the needs of the army or for the needs of the corruption that exists in the forest industry? The environment suffers hits from all sides,” she said.

Back in Irpin, nature is slowly fighting back. Next to the wreck of a burnt-out Russian armored vehicle, green shoots are beginning to emerge on a damaged tree. The lilac bushes standing outside homes along the road through the forest are bursting with color.

The huge exodus of people from the capital, combined with acute shortages of fuel mean that, paradoxically, air quality in the region is now better than it has been in years.

“Nature is, as we say, the ‘poor sister,’” Bondarenko said. “We think of nature last. First of all, we think about our lives and about the lives of our loved ones and our friends and other people, then we think about our homes and jobs, and so on, and then, at the end of the list, we think about nature.

“I believe we have a chance, despite the war, to make cardinal changes in our attitude towards nature, environmental protection, energy and our use of green resources,” he added.

The town of Irpin takes its name from the Irpin River, which meanders through the region before flowing into the Dnipro.

“The river played an important role in the defense of Kyiv,” Bondarenko said. “Our armed forces blew up bridges and were forced to open dams to flood the Irpin riverbed to stop the invaders from crossing it on pontoon bridges and coming to Kyiv.”

When the army opened the dam on the Irpin River in Demydiv on the second day of the war, vast ancient wetlands that were drained during the Soviet era returned to their original state – and helped to protect Kyiv in the process.

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HEADLINE	05/22 Russia pounds Donbas, Mykolaiv regions
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-pounds-ukraines-donbas-mykolaiv-regions-2022-05-22/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-pounds-ukraines-donbas-mykolaiv-regions-2022-05-22/</a>
GIST	LONDON, May 22 (Reuters) - Russia pounded Ukrainian forces with airstrikes and artillery in the east and the south, targeting command centres, troops, and ammunition depots, the Russian defence ministry said on Sunday.

	<p>Major General Igor Konashenkov, spokesman for the defence ministry, said air-launched missiles hit three command points, 13 areas where troops and Ukrainian military equipment amassed, as well as four ammunition depots in the Donbas.</p> <p>In Ukraine's southern region of Mykolaiv, Russian rockets hit a mobile anti-drone system near the settlement of Hannivka, around 100 km northeast of Mykolaiv city, Konashenkov said.</p> <p>Rockets "and artillery hit 583 areas where troops and Ukrainian military equipment amassed, 41 control points, 76 artillery and mortar units in firing positions, including three Grad batteries, as well as a Bukovel Ukrainian electronic warfare station near the settlement of Hannivka, Mykolaiv region," he said.</p> <p>Since the Feb. 24 start of what Moscow calls its "special military operation," Russia has destroyed 174 aircraft, 125 helicopters, 977 unmanned aerial vehicles, 317 anti-aircraft missile systems, 3,198 tanks and other armoured combat vehicles, and 408 multiple rocket launchers, Konashenkov said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Ukraine rules out ceasefire, territory</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-rules-out-ceasefire-fighting-intensifies-donbas-2022-05-22/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-rules-out-ceasefire-fighting-intensifies-donbas-2022-05-22/</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, May 22 (Reuters) - Ukraine ruled out a ceasefire or any territorial concessions to Moscow while Russia intensified its attack in the eastern Donbas region and stopped sending gas to Finland in its latest response to Western sanctions and its deepening international isolation.</p> <p>Polish President Andrzej Duda told Ukraine's parliament that ceding even "one inch" of the country's territory would be a blow to the whole West and reassured Kyiv of Warsaw's strong backing for its European Union membership bid.</p> <p>"Worrying voices have appeared, saying that Ukraine should give in to (President Vladimir) Putin's demands," Duda said, the first foreign leader to address Ukrainian lawmakers in person since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion.</p> <p>"Only Ukraine has the right to decide about its future."</p> <p>After ending weeks of resistance by the last Ukrainian fighters in the strategic southeastern port of Mariupol, Russia is waging a major offensive in Luhansk, one of two provinces in Donbas.</p> <p>Russian-backed separatists already controlled parts of Luhansk and the neighbouring Donetsk province before the invasion, but Moscow wants to seize the remaining Ukrainian-held territory in the region.</p> <p>On the Donetsk frontline, Russian forces were trying to break through Ukrainian defences to reach the administrative borders of the Luhansk region, while further north they continued heavy shelling of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, Ukraine's general staff said in its daily update on Sunday.</p> <p>Sievierodonetsk and its twin Lysychansk across the Siverskiy Donets River form the eastern part of a Ukrainian-held pocket that Russia has been trying to overrun since mid-April after failing to capture Kyiv and shifting its focus to the east and south of the country.</p> <p>The British Defence Ministry said on Sunday that Russia was deploying its BMP-T "Terminator" tank-support vehicles in that offensive. With only 10 available for a unit that already suffered heavy losses in the failed attempt on Kyiv, however, the ministry said they were "unlikely to have a significant impact".</p> <p>Ukraine's lead negotiator, speaking to Reuters on Saturday, ruled out a ceasefire or any deal with Moscow that involved ceding territory. Making concessions would backfire because Russia would hit back harder after any break in fighting, Zelenskiy's adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said.</p>

"The war will not stop. It will just be put on pause for some time," Podolyak said in an interview in the heavily guarded presidential office. "They'll start a new offensive, even more bloody and large-scale."

Recent calls for an immediate ceasefire have come from U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi. [read more](#)

The end of fighting in Mariupol, the biggest city Russia has captured, gives Russian President Vladimir Putin a rare victory after a series of setbacks in nearly three months of combat.

The last Ukrainian forces holed up in Mariupol's vast Azovstal steelworks have surrendered, the Russian defence ministry said on Friday. While Ukraine has not confirmed all its forces have left, the commander of the Azov regiment, one of the units in the factory, said in a video that Ukraine's military command had ordered the forces in Mariupol to stand down in order to preserve their lives. [read more](#)

Full control of Mariupol gives Russia command of a land route linking the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow seized in 2014, with mainland Russia and parts of eastern Ukraine held by pro-Russia separatists.

#### GAS DISPUTE

Russian state gas company Gazprom (GAZP.MM) said on Saturday it had halted gas exports to Finland, which has refused Moscow's demands to pay in roubles for Russian gas after Western countries imposed sanctions over the invasion.

Finland said it was prepared for the cutoff of Russian flows. It applied together with its Nordic neighbour Sweden on Wednesday to join the NATO military alliance, although that is facing resistance from NATO member Turkey.

Most European supply contracts are denominated in euros or dollars. Last month, Moscow cut off gas to Bulgaria and Poland after they rejected the new terms.

Western nations have also stepped up weapons supplies to Ukraine. On Saturday, Kyiv got another huge boost when U.S. President Joe Biden signed a bill to provide nearly \$40 billion in military, economic and humanitarian aid.

Moscow says Western sanctions, along with arms deliveries for Kyiv, amount to a "proxy war" by the United States and its allies.

Putin calls the invasion a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and rid it of radical anti-Russian nationalists. Ukraine and its allies have dismissed that as a baseless pretext for the war, which has killed thousands of people in Ukraine, displaced millions and shattered cities.

Zelenskyy said he stressed the importance of more sanctions on Russia and unblocking Ukrainian ports in a call with Italy's Draghi on Saturday.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 APEC: 5 nations walk out over Russia war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/us-others-walk-out-apec-talks-over-russias-ukraine-invasion-officials-2022-05-21/">https://www.reuters.com/world/us-others-walk-out-apec-talks-over-russias-ukraine-invasion-officials-2022-05-21/</a>
GIST	<p>BANGKOK, May 21 (Reuters) - Representatives of the United States and several other nations walked out of an Asia-Pacific trade ministers meeting in Bangkok on Saturday to protest Russia's invasion of Ukraine, officials said.</p> <p>The walkout was "an expression of disapproval at Russia's illegal war of aggression in Ukraine and its economic impact in the APEC region," one diplomat said.</p>



	<p>Representatives from Canada, New Zealand, Japan and Australia joined the Americans, led by Trade Representative Katherine Tai, in walking out of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting, two Thai officials and two international diplomats told Reuters.</p> <p>Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, saying it aimed to demilitarise and "denazify" its neighbour. Ukraine and the West say President Vladimir Putin launched an unprovoked war of aggression, which has claimed thousands of civilian lives, sent millions of Ukrainians fleeing and caused economic fallout around the world.</p> <p>Another diplomat said the five countries that staged the protest wanted "stronger language on Russia's war" in the group's final statement to be issued on Sunday.</p> <p>"The meeting will not be a failure if (a joint statement) cannot be issued," Thai Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit told reporters, adding that the meeting was "progressing well" despite the walk out.</p> <p>The walkout took place while Russian Economy Minister Maxim Reshetnikov was delivering remarks at the opening of the two-day meeting from the group of 21 economies.</p> <p>The delegations from five countries that staged the protest returned to the meeting after Reshetnikov finished speaking, a Thai official said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Covid, shootings: mass death tolerated?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/is-mass-death-now-tolerated-in-america-shootings-covid-b95cba76f15acf801d5a6b0d1d3d559f">https://apnews.com/article/is-mass-death-now-tolerated-in-america-shootings-covid-b95cba76f15acf801d5a6b0d1d3d559f</a>
GIST	<p>PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — After mass shootings killed and wounded people grocery shopping, going to church and simply living their lives last weekend, the nation marked a milestone of 1 million deaths from COVID-19. The number, once unthinkable, is now an irreversible reality in the United States — just like the persistent reality of gun violence that kills tens of thousands of people every year.</p> <p>Americans have always tolerated high rates of death and suffering — among certain segments of society. But the sheer numbers of deaths from preventable causes, and the apparent acceptance that no policy change is on the horizon, raises the question: Has mass death become accepted in America?</p> <p>"I think the evidence is unmistakable and quite clear. We will tolerate an enormous amount of carnage, suffering and death in the U.S., because we have over the past two years. We have over our history," says Gregg Gonsalves, an epidemiologist and professor at Yale who, before that, was a leading member of the AIDS advocacy group ACT UP.</p> <p>"If I thought the AIDS epidemic was bad, the American response to COVID-19 has sort of ... it's a form of the American grotesque, right?" Gonsalves says. "Really — a million people are dead? And you're going to talk to me about your need to get back to normal, when for the most part most of us have been living pretty reasonable lives for the past six months?"</p> <p>Certain communities have always borne the brunt of higher death rates in the United States. There are profound racial and class inequalities in the United States, and our tolerance of death is partly based on who is at risk, says Elizabeth Wrigley-Field, a sociology professor at the University of Minnesota who studies mortality.</p> <p>"Some people's deaths matter a lot more than others," she laments. "And I think that's what we're seeing in this really brutal way with this coincidence of timing."</p> <p>In Buffalo, the alleged shooter was a racist bent on killing as many Black people as he could, according to authorities. The family of 86-year-old Ruth Whitfield, one of 10 people killed there in an attack on a grocery store that served the African American community, channeled the grief and frustration of millions</p>

as they demanded action, including passage of a hate crime bill and accountability for those who spread hateful rhetoric.

“You expect us to keep doing this over and over and over again — over again, forgive and forget,” her son, former Buffalo Fire Commissioner Garnell Whitfield, Jr., told reporters. “While people we elect and trust in offices around this country do their best not to protect us, not to consider us equal.”

That sense — that politicians have done little even as the violence repeats itself — is shared by many Americans. It’s a dynamic that’s encapsulated by the “thoughts and prayers” offered to victims of gun violence by politicians unwilling to make meaningful commitments to ensure there really is no more “never again,” according to Martha Lincoln, an anthropology professor at San Francisco State University who studies the cultural politics of public health.

“I don’t think that most Americans feel good about it. I think most Americans would like to see real action from their leaders in the culture about these pervasive issues,” says Lincoln, who adds that there is a similar “political vacuum” around COVID-19.

The high numbers of deaths from COVID-19, guns and other causes are difficult to fathom and can start to feel like background noise, disconnected from the individuals whose lives were lost and the families whose lives were forever altered.

With COVID-19, American society has even come to accept the deaths of children from a preventable cause. In a recent guest column published in The Advocate newspaper, pediatrician Dr. Mark W. Kline pointed out that more than 1,500 children have died from COVID-19, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, despite the “myth” that it is harmless for children. Kline wrote that there was a time in pediatrics when “children were not supposed to die.”

“There was no acceptable pediatric body count,” he wrote. “At least, not before the first pandemic of the social media age, COVID-19, changed everything.”

There are many parallels between the U.S. response to COVID-19 and its response to the gun violence epidemic, says Sonali Rajan, a professor at Columbia University who researches school violence.

“We have long normalized mass death in this country. Gun violence has persisted as a public health crisis for decades,” she says, noting that an estimated 100,000 people are shot every year and some 40,000 will die.

Gun violence is such a part of life in America now that we organize our lives around its inevitability. Children do lockdown drills at school. And in about half the states, Rajan says, teachers are allowed to carry firearms.

When she looks at the current response to COVID-19, she sees similar dynamics. Americans, she says, “deserve to be able to commute to work without getting sick, or work somewhere without getting sick, or send their kids to school without them getting sick.”

“What will happen down the line if more and more people get sick and are disabled?” she asks. “What happens? Do we just kind of live like this for the foreseeable future?”

It’s important, she says, to ask what policies are being put forth by elected officials who have the power to “attend to the health and the well-being of their constituents.”

“It’s remarkable how that responsibility has been sort of abdicated, is how I would describe it,” Rajan says.

The level of concern about deaths often depends on context, says Rajiv Sethi, an economics professor at Barnard College who has written about both gun violence and COVID-19. He points to a rare but dramatic event such as an airplane crash or an accident at a nuclear power plant, which do seem to matter to people.

By contrast, something like traffic deaths gets less attention. The government this week said that nearly 43,000 people had died on the nation's roads last year, the highest level in 16 years. The federal government unveiled a national strategy earlier this year to combat the problem.

Even when talking about gun violence, the Buffalo shooting has gotten a lot of attention, but mass shootings represent a small number of the gun deaths that happen in the United States every year, Sethi says. For example, there are more suicides from guns in America than there are homicides, an estimated 24,000 gun suicides compared with 19,000 homicides. But even though there are policy proposals that could help within the bounds of the Second Amendment, he says, the debate on guns is politically entrenched.

"The result is that nothing is done," Sethi says. "The result is paralysis."

Dr. Megan Ranney of Brown University's School of Public Health calls it a frustrating "learned helplessness."

"There's been almost a sustained narrative created by some that tells people that these things are inevitable," says Ranney, an ER doctor who did gun violence research before COVID-19 hit. "It divides us when people think that there's nothing they can do."

She wonders if people really understand the sheer numbers of people dying from guns, from COVID-19 and from opioids. The CDC said this month that more than 107,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021, setting a record.

Ranney also points to false narratives spread by bad actors, such as denying that the deaths were preventable, or suggesting those who die deserved it. There is an emphasis in the United States on individual responsibility for one's health, Ranney says — and a tension between the individual and the community.

"It's not that we put less value on an individual life, but rather we're coming up against the limits of that approach," she says. "Because the truth is, is that any individual's life, any individual's death or disability, actually affects the larger community."

Similar debates happened in the last century about child labor laws, worker protections and reproductive rights, Ranney says.

An understanding of history is important, says Wrigley-Field, who teaches the history of ACT UP in one of her classes. During the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, the White House press secretary made anti-gay jokes when asked about AIDS, and everyone in the room laughed. Activists were able to mobilize a mass movement that forced people to change the way they thought and forced politicians to change the way they operated, she says.

"I don't think that those things are off the table now. It's just that it's not really clear if they're going to emerge," Wrigley-Field says. "I don't think giving up is a permanent state of affairs. But I do think that's where we're at, right at this moment."

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HEADLINE	05/22 Fate of Mariupol POWs stirs concern
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-moscow-d99f8629e85798abb6d51749350553ae">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-moscow-d99f8629e85798abb6d51749350553ae</a>

POKROVSK, Ukraine (AP) — With Russia claiming to have taken prisoner nearly 2,500 Ukrainian fighters from the besieged Mariupol steel plant, concerns grew about their fate as a Moscow-backed separatist leader vowed they would face tribunals.

Russia has declared its full control of the Azovstal steel plant, which for weeks was the last holdout in Mariupol and a symbol of Ukrainian tenacity in the strategic port city, now in ruins with more than 20,000 residents feared dead. The seizure gives Russian President Vladimir Putin a badly wanted victory in the war he began nearly three months ago.

As the West rallies behind Ukraine, Polish President Andrzej Duda arrived in Ukraine on an unannounced visit and will address the country's parliament on Sunday, his office said.

Poland, which has welcomed millions of Ukrainian refugees since the start of the war, is a strong supporter of Ukraine's desire to join the European Union. With Russia blocking Ukraine's sea ports, Poland has become a major gateway for Western humanitarian aid and weapons going into Ukraine and has been helping Ukraine get its grain and other agricultural products to world markets.

The Russian Defense Ministry released video of Ukrainian soldiers being detained after announcing that its forces had removed the last holdouts from the Mariupol plant's extensive underground tunnels. It said a total of 2,439 had surrendered.

Family members of the fighters, who came from a variety of military and law enforcement units, have pleaded for them to be given rights as prisoners of war and eventually returned to Ukraine. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said Saturday that Ukraine "will fight for the return" of every one of them.

Denis Pushilin, the pro-Kremlin head of an area of eastern Ukraine controlled by Moscow-backed separatists, said the captured fighters included some foreign nationals, though he did not provide details. He said they were sure to face a tribunal. Russian officials and state media have sought to characterize the fighters as neo-Nazis and criminals.

"I believe that justice must be restored. There is a request for this from ordinary people, society, and, probably, the sane part of the world community," Russian state news agency Tass quoted Pushilin as saying.

Among the defenders were members of the Azov Regiment, whose far-right origins have been seized on by the Kremlin as part of its effort to cast the invasion as a battle against Nazi influence in Ukraine.

A prominent member of Russia's parliament, Leonid Slutsky, said Moscow was studying the possibility of exchanging the Azovstal fighters for Viktor Medvedchuk, a wealthy Ukrainian with close ties to Putin who faces criminal charges in Ukraine, the Russian news agency Interfax reported. Slutsky later walked back those remarks, saying he agreed with Pushilin that their fate should be decided by a tribunal.

The Ukrainian government has not commented on Russia's claim of capturing Azovstal. Ukraine's military had told the fighters their mission was complete and they could come out. It described their extraction as an evacuation, not a mass surrender.

The capture of Mariupol furthers Russia's quest to create a land bridge from Russia stretching through the Donbas region to the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014.

The impact on the broader war remained unclear. Many Russian troops already had been redeployed from Mariupol to elsewhere in the conflict.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov reported Saturday that Russia destroyed a Ukrainian special-operations base near Odesa, Ukraine's main Black Sea port, as well as a significant cache of Western-supplied weapons in northern Ukraine's Zhytomyr region. There was no confirmation from the Ukrainian side.

The Ukrainian military reported heavy fighting in much of the Donbas in eastern Ukraine.

“The situation in Donbas is extremely difficult,” President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address to the nation. “As in previous days, the Russian army is trying to attack Sloviansk and Sievierodonetsk.” He said Ukrainian forces are holding off the offensive “every day.”

Sievierodonetsk is the main city under Ukrainian control in the Luhansk region, which together with the Donetsk region makes up the Donbas. Gov. Serhii Haidai said the only functioning hospital in the city has just three doctors and supplies for 10 days.

On Sunday, the British Ministry of Defense said Russia’s only operational company of BMP-T Terminator tank support vehicles, which are designed to protect main battle tanks, “has likely been deployed to the Sievierodonetsk axis of the Donbas offensive.” It said, however, with a maximum of 10 of the vehicles deployed, “they are unlikely to have a significant impact on the campaign.”

Sloviansk, in the Donetsk region, is critical to Russia’s objective of capturing all of eastern Ukraine and saw fierce fighting last month after Moscow’s troops backed off from Kyiv. Russian shelling on Saturday killed seven civilians and injured 10 more elsewhere in the region, the governor said.

A monastery in the Donetsk region village of Bohorodichne was evacuated after being hit by a Russian airstrike, the regional police said Saturday. About 100 monks, nuns and children had been seeking safe shelter in the basement of the church and no one was hurt, the police said in a Facebook post, which included a video showing extensive damage to the monastery as well as nuns, monks and children boarding vans on Friday for the evacuation.

Zelenskyy on Saturday emphasized that the Donbas remains part of Ukraine and his forces were fighting to liberate it.

Speaking at a joint news conference with Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa, he pressed Western countries for multiple-launch rocket systems, which he said “just stand still” in other countries yet are key to Ukraine’s success.

Portugal and Poland, where Costa stopped for talks before traveling on to Kyiv, support bringing Ukraine into the European Union quickly, even if some other EU members balk at granting it speedy access.

U.S. President Joe Biden signed off Saturday on a fresh, \$40 billion infusion of aid for Ukraine, with half for military assistance. Portugal pledged up to 250 million euros, as well as continued shipments of military equipment.

Mariupol, which is part of the Donbas, was blockaded early in the war and became a frightening example to people elsewhere in the country of the hunger, terror and death they might face if the Russians surrounded their communities.

The seaside steelworks, occupying some 11 square kilometers (4 square miles), were a battleground for weeks. Drawing Russian airstrikes, artillery and tank fire, the dwindling group of outgunned Ukrainian fighters held out with the help of airdrops that Zelenskyy said cost the lives of many “absolutely heroic” helicopter pilots.

The Russian Defense Ministry on Saturday released video of Russian troops taking into custody Serhiy Volynskyy, the commander of the Ukrainian Navy’s 36th Special Marine Brigade, which was one of the main forces defending the steel plant. The Associated Press has not been able to independently verify the date, location and conditions of the video.

With Russia controlling the city, Ukrainian authorities are likely to face delays in documenting evidence of alleged Russian atrocities in Mariupol, including the bombings of a maternity hospital and a theater

where hundreds of civilians had taken cover. Satellite images in April showed what appeared to be mass graves just outside Mariupol, where local officials accused Russia of concealing the slaughter by burying up to 9,000 civilians.

An estimated 100,000 of the 450,000 people who resided in Mariupol before the war remain. Many, trapped by Russia's siege, were left without food, water and electricity.

The Ukrainian mayor of Mariupol warned Saturday the city is facing a health and sanitation "catastrophe" from mass burials in shallow pits across the ruined city as well as the breakdown of sewage systems. Vadim Boychenko said summer rains threaten to contaminate water sources as he pressed Russian forces to allow residents to safely leave the city.

"In addition to the humanitarian catastrophe created by the (Russian) occupiers and collaborators, the city is on the verge of an outbreak of infectious diseases," he said on the messaging app Telegram.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Syria barrel bomb experts in Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/syrias-barrel-bomb-experts-in-russia-to-help-with-potential-ukraine-campaign">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/syrias-barrel-bomb-experts-in-russia-to-help-with-potential-ukraine-campaign</a>
GIST	<p>Technicians linked to the Syrian military's infamous barrel bombs that have wreaked devastation across much of the country have been deployed to Russia to help potentially prepare for a similar campaign in the Ukraine war, European officials believe.</p> <p>Intelligence officers say more than 50 specialists, all with vast experience in making and delivering the crude explosive, have been in Russia for several weeks working alongside officials from Vladimir Putin's military.</p> <p>Their arrival is understood to be one factor behind US and European warnings that the Russian military may have been preparing for the use of chemical weapons in the conflict, which has entered its fourth month with little sign of slowing.</p> <p>Barrel bombs – crude explosives packed in to a drum and dropped from a helicopter – were used to devastating effect throughout the Syrian war. The regime was also regularly accused of filling canisters with chlorine and dropping them on opposition held towns and cities, causing hundreds of deaths and sparking widespread alarm.</p> <p>With no anti-aircraft weapons, the anti-Assad opposition had little to counter the Syrian military's air supremacy, which was a big factor in the regime clawing back parts of the country after 10 years of war.</p> <p>The situation is very different in Ukraine, however, where Ukrainian troops armed with lethal ground to air missiles can bring down Russian jets and helicopters, stalling advances and exposing ground forces to withering artillery fire.</p> <p>"This is probably why we haven't seen them cross the border," said one European official. "We know the capacity is there, but if they use it, they lose; we will know who's done it, and they will likely be killed anyway."</p> <p>The barrel bomb specialists were at the vanguard of the forces the Syrian government sent to Russia to support Putin, whose backing had been instrumental in securing Assad regime's grip on power.</p> <p>The officials believe between 800 and 1,000 Syrian troops have so far volunteered to travel to Russia, where the Kremlin has promised them salaries of between \$1,500-\$4,000 – up to 20 times the amounts they would receive in Syria, where an economic collapse has ravaged the local currency's value.</p>

The Syrian government has established four main recruiting centres for the Russian deployment, in Damascus, Latakia, Hama and Homs. Recruits are deployed under contract with the Wagner Group, the Russian private military organisation, which has played a leading role in hiring mercenaries to support Russia's foreign adventures.

Wagner has been prominent in Libya and eastern Syria supporting Russia's interests. However, it has sometimes had a frayed relationship with the Kremlin. In early 2018, its forces were engaged in a brutal battle with US and Kurdish forces in the Syrian province of Deir Azzour, in which more than 140 mercenaries were killed, mainly by US artillery. European officials say that the Russian government had given a green light for the attack.

"It seems they had gotten too big for their boots," an official said. "We know for a fact that the Kremlin cut them loose."

Ever since though, Wagner has been central to Russia's actions. Its forces were among the first deployed into Ukraine and are accused of committing atrocities in Bucha, where up to 1,000 people were massacred over a few days in early April.

A relative of a Syrian army lieutenant who signed up to fight in Ukraine denied his uncle was a mercenary. "They are going there as a regular army unit," he said. "He is traveling with a full platoon. Only four of them didn't want to go. Putin did a lot for us, and we can help him now."

In late April, the Ukrainian government claimed that up to 25 Libyan or Syrian fighters had been killed in the town of Popasna, though this was denied by both Syrian officials and opposition members.

"I asked my uncle that," said the relative who refused to be named. "He said it's not them, but it might be Libyans. He insists that not one of them has crossed the border."

Wagner is thought to have deployed up to 500 men as reconnaissance elements in Ukraine. Many have been flown in from hotspots around north and central Africa.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Day 87 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/21/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-87-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/21/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-87-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Russia has taken control of the Azovstal steel plant</b>, the country's defence ministry said on Friday evening. Ukrainian soldiers had finally ended their defence of the site in Mariupol, according to the commander of Ukraine's Azov regiment, Denys Prokopenko. In a video statement, he said <a href="#">civilians and heavily wounded Ukrainian fighters have been evacuated from the plant</a>. The Kremlin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said the Ukrainian combatants would be treated in line with international norms for prisoners of war, though several senior Russian politicians <a href="#">demanded this week they be put on trial and one called for their execution</a>.</li><li>• <b>Intense fighting has been reported around the Ukrainian city of Severodonetsk</b>, Luhansk, as Russian forces appear to be stepping up an offensive to encircle its Ukrainian defenders. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said the eastern provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk – <a href="#">known collectively as the Donbas – were being turned into "hell"</a> and warned that what he called the "final stage of the war" would be the bloodiest. "They completely ruined Rubizhne, Vonokvakh, just as Mariupol," he said in a video address late on Friday, adding the Russians were "trying to do the same with Severodonetsk and many other cities".</li><li>• <b>Twelve people were killed and another 40 wounded by Russian shelling in Severodonetsk</b>, the regional governor said. <b>Troops fired on a school in the eastern city, killing three adults</b>, according to a Ukrainian official. More than <a href="#">200 people, including children, were sheltering at the school</a> when the attack took place this morning, said the head of the Luhansk regional state administration, Serhiy Haidai.</li><li>• <b>At least seven people, including a child, have been injured in a Russian missile attack on the town of Lozova in the Kharkiv region</b> in eastern Ukraine, according to reports. The missile</li></ul>



had [targeted “the newly renovated House of Culture” in Lozova](#), Zelenskiy said in a statement on social media.

- **Zelenskiy proposed a formal deal with the country’s allies to secure Russian compensation** for damage its forces have caused during the war. Zelenskiy, who says Russia is trying to destroy as much of Ukraine’s infrastructure as it can, said such a deal would show nations planning aggressive acts that they would have to pay for their actions. “We invite partner countries to sign a multilateral agreement and create a mechanism ensuring that everybody who suffered from Russian actions can receive compensation for all losses incurred,” he said in a video address on Friday.
- **G7 industrialised nations have pledged \$19.8bn (£15.9bn or €18.7bn) to bolster Ukraine’s public finances as Kyiv battles Russia’s invasion.** Germany’s finance minister, Christian Lindner, told reporters [that \\$9.5bn of the total was mobilised at meetings of the G7 finance ministers](#) in Koenigswinter, Germany, this week.
- **Moody’s on Friday cut Ukraine’s debt rating** for the second time in three months and lowered the outlook to negative due to the growing risk the Russian invasion will affect the nation’s debt sustainability. The US Congress on Thursday approved a \$40bn aid package for Ukraine to help fight Russia and keep the government operating, adding to aid packages and loans from the IMF and World Bank. **Zelenskiy said his government needs \$7bn a month** to keep its economy afloat, while Moody’s estimates Ukraine faces financing needs of around \$50bn this year.
- **A Ukrainian fighter who shared a series of powerful photographs while defending the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol appears to have been taken captive by Russian forces.** Dmytro Kozatskyi posted [a link to a Google drive containing images he had taken of inside the plant](#), writing: “Well, that’s all. Thank you from the shelter, Azovstal is the place of my death and my life.”
- **Russian gas giant Gazprom’s exporting arm, Gazprom Export, has confirmed it will suspend gas sales** for Finnish state-owned gas wholesaler Gasum, starting from Saturday. The Gasum CEO, Mika Wiljanen, described the news as “regrettable” and [sought to reassure customers that there would be enough gas](#) in the coming months. Gasum said the taps would be turned off when its contract with Gazprom ended at 7am (0400 GMT). The move, which Russia has blamed on Finland’s refusal to pay in rubles, comes days after Finland and Sweden submitted a joint application for Nato membership.
- **Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said he would speak to Finland tomorrow regarding its bid to join Nato and maintained his opposition to Finland and Sweden’s membership bids.** Erdoğan told reporters he had discussed the issue with the Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, [and that he would also be speaking to Britain tomorrow](#).
- **A Russian tank commander who pleaded guilty earlier this week to shooting dead an unarmed Ukrainian civilian has said he will accept any punishment** from the court. Vadim Shysimarin, 21, [told courtroom No 201 of the Kyiv tribunal that he “was nervous about what was going on”](#) on the day 62-year-old Oleksandr Shelipov died and that he “didn’t want to kill”, on the third day of the first war crimes trial resulting from Russia’s war in Ukraine.
- **The US has accused Russia of holding the world’s food supply hostage amid growing fears of famine in developing countries.** Dmitry Medvedev, a former president of Russia, [warned that Russia would not continue food supplies unless the west eased its sanctions](#) on the Kremlin.
- **Senior Russian officials have proposed a new law that would eliminate age limits for military contract soldiers**, in another sign the country is facing a shortage of infantry to continue its offensive in Ukraine. Currently, [Russians aged 18-40 and foreigners aged 18-30 can enter](#) into a first contract with the army.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Artillery leading the fight in Ukraine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/20/artillery-leading-fight-ukraine/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/20/artillery-leading-fight-ukraine/</a>
GIST	Artillery has long been known as the “King of Battle” for its crucial role in warfare, though its fundamentals have changed very little since the Chinese discovered gunpowder technology in the ninth century: Propel a heavy object at the enemy through a tube using explosive force. But military strategists

say the surprising course of the three-month Russian invasion of Ukraine has added a new, potentially game-changing aspect to the power of artillery in modern warfare.

As Russian forces struggle to gain any traction in the fighting so far, the Pentagon has provided Kyiv with 90 top-of-the-line 155mm M777 howitzers to aid in the fight and is running hundreds of Ukrainian troops through special training classes to get them up to speed on the systems. Meanwhile, other NATO members have also provided Ukraine with howitzers for the next phase of the conflict there.

“They know what they’re up against,” a senior Defense Department official said Thursday. “We’re pulling artillerymen out of the fight to learn these howitzers and then we’re putting them back in.”

Weapons in the military can generally be divided into two categories: direct and indirect fire. An infantryman’s rifle or a tank gun is a direct-fire weapon, employed to hit things the operator can see. Artillery, by contrast, is an indirect-fire weapon. With a little bit of math and a forward observer who can read a map, the operators of an M777 howitzer can strike a target about 20 miles away.

Just before leaving on an extended Asian diplomatic tour, President Biden on Thursday formally authorized a \$100 million security assistance package for Ukraine that will mean 18 additional 155mm howitzers heading to Kyiv, along with enough tactical vehicles to tow them. A separate, \$40 billion package of U.S. economic, security and humanitarian aid was approved by the Senate Thursday and is expected to be signed by the president in the coming days.

Ukraine Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov told Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin that the U.S.-provided artillery cannons are “forward in the fight” and providing long-range indirect fire capability to the country’s forces as they battle Russian and separatist forces in the country’s eastern Donbas region, the focus of current fighting after Russian forces were blocked from advances on Kyiv and other major cities.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has committed an estimated 80% of his total battalion tactical groups to Ukraine. While his losses have been high, Russia still has about 140 BTGs available and at least 106 operational in Ukraine, Pentagon officials said.

### **Shifting the focus**

In the early stages of the conflict, Russia’s armored advantage proved of little value as the Kremlin’s hoped-for lightning victory was blocked by fierce Ukrainian resistance. Local forces could step out from behind a corner and knock out a Russian tank or armored personnel carrier before blending back into the community.

As the focus of the fighting has shifted back to the east, the flat open terrain there has only magnified the role of artillery in the fighting. As Russia’s supplies have been drained in the fighting, NATO nations are stepping up to fill the gaps in Ukraine’s arsenal.

The commanding role artillery can take on today’s battlefields was never so obvious as on May 13, 2022, when the Russian military repeatedly attempted to cross the Severodonetsk River near Luhansk. Ukraine launched a barrage of artillery on the Russian positions, knocking out dozens of tanks, armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles.

Artillery “has been the largest casualty inflictor in Ukraine up to this point,” said retired Army Lt. Gen. Stephen Lanza, a board member of the Army’s Field Artillery Association. “When you send 90 howitzers, that’s a significant impact on the battlefield.”

The Pentagon says the 155mm howitzers it sent to Ukraine are ideal for the military and the terrain on which they are fighting. Unlike a self-propelled gun such as the M-109, there is no need to train their soldiers on basic automotive maintenance. If necessary, a farmer’s tractor can tow an M777 howitzer to a desirable firing position.

“The type of conflict we’re looking at in Ukraine has changed,” said Brad Bowman, a former Army officer and currently the senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. “There’s now a different topography with more open areas. It seems more like Kansas than what we saw north of Kyiv.”

Artillery will become increasingly important as the conflict in Ukraine bogs down into more “positional warfare,” said Mark Cancian, a retired Marine Corps colonel and senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“In war, the artillery does most of the killing and the infantry does most of the dying. There’s no reason to think this war would be any different,” he said. “Its contribution to modern warfare is underestimated because it is not as exciting.”

In addition, artillery units can operate during the day or night and in all types of weather, an advantage they have over air support missions.

The weapons flow could have a political dimension as well, in light of Ukraine’s long-expressed hopes to one day join the NATO Western military alliance. Russia’s Mr. Putin has said that would be a red line for the Kremlin, but his invasion has only boosted Kyiv’s familiarity with NATO weaponry, training regimens and military doctrine. The recent influx of U.S.-supplied artillery, for example, means Ukraine’s military — long thought to be far short of the professionalism needed to be a NATO candidate — is steadily moving to the NATO standard caliber system and away from the Soviet standard.

“That opens up a whole range of projectiles that they didn’t have access to before. That includes precision-guided missiles,” Mr. Cancian said. “It would make no sense to give them a 155mm howitzer and not give them the precision ammunition that goes with it.”

### **Overloaded?**

The U.S. has sent Ukraine billions of dollars worth of security assistance — everything from artillery to radar systems used to locate enemy guns. Despite the widely admired way Ukraine’s military has held at bay its larger and better-armed neighbor, some say there is a danger that too much is coming in too quickly.

Mr. Cancian said he’s concerned about whether the military hardware bonanza will simply overwhelm the Ukrainians.

“The Ukrainians weren’t very good at maintaining equipment before the war began. Now, they’re even more stretched,” he said. “A new piece of gear takes some time to master and understand.”

The Pentagon has been bullish on its training program for the M777 howitzers. But Mr. Cancian questioned whether such an improvised operation will bear much fruit.

“The whole ‘train the trainer’ idea barely works in the best of times and this is not the best of times,” he said. “I think we’re going to end up having to provide operational contractors in Ukraine to maintain this equipment. It’s just going to overwhelm them.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Maryland race track evicts trucker convoy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/21/hagerstown-speedway-evicts-truckers-from-peoples-c/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/21/hagerstown-speedway-evicts-truckers-from-peoples-c/</a>
GIST	<p>HAGERSTOWN, Md. (AP) — A western Maryland race track has evicted the remnants of a trucker protest that had used the site as a staging ground.</p> <p>The People’s Convoy had conducted a series of rolling protests around the Capital Beltway in March to protest pandemic restrictions and other grievances.</p>

	<p>After a hiatus, a smaller group of truckers returned Wednesday to the Hagerstown Speedway.</p> <p>But The Herald-Mail in Hagerstown reported Saturday that Speedway General Manager Lisa Plessinger asked the group to leave amid infighting over its next steps.</p> <p>The last of the truckers left Friday night, she said.</p> <p>She compared the convoy to “like when your mother-in-law comes to visit and decides to stay.”</p> <p>A press release issued Friday on a Facebook page for The People’s Convoy “declares victory and announces its conclusion of the national convoy portion of this great movement.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Gas prices rattle but drivers stay on roads</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/20/gas-prices-driving-inflation/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/20/gas-prices-driving-inflation/</a>
GIST	<p>The shocks of high gasoline costs are ricocheting through the economy, and industry analysts see little relief on the horizon.</p> <p>Retailers and trucking companies are in a state of high anxiety over worsening diesel shortages that may lead to intermittent rationing in some places. Similar worries are gripping the airline industry as jet fuel becomes more scarce. Manufacturers are wrestling with the cost of plastic packaging, which is made from the same crude oil in high demand for gasoline. Even boaters are weighing whether they should delay putting their vessels in the water, now that filling their tanks can run hundreds of dollars more.</p> <p>The price spikes are even affecting school meals. In Davenport, Iowa, snacks of rainbow carrots and other fresh fruits and vegetables delivered as part of a federal grant to promote healthy eating were suddenly in jeopardy as gas prices surged past \$4. The vendor had tacked on extra charges to cover the high price of fuel, forcing some schools to end deliveries early.</p> <p>Troubles with bread came next. The company delivering it first asked for hefty fuel surcharges before ultimately telling the district not to bother. It said it can’t afford to keep loaves coming to schools next year at all. The district has turned to another company, paying nearly double — \$40,000 more — for less frequent deliveries.</p> <p>“It’s very stressful,” said Coni Dobbels, the Davenport school district’s director of food and nutrition services. “People keep saying, ‘Aren’t things at schools better this year than they were last year?’ They’re not. I have never experienced anything like this.”</p> <p>Gas prices have emerged as a particular worry amid other troubling signs about the U.S. economy. Fears that the country could be headed toward a recession, fanned by major retailers reporting lower earnings this week, helped push the S&amp;P 500 briefly into a bear market territory Friday before a late-day rally. Prices for food, shelter and other forms of energy have been steadily rising as well, fueling inflation.</p> <p>The price of fuel keeps <a href="#">passing</a> earlier milestones, now averaging more than \$4.59 per gallon nationwide. That is 50 percent higher than gas was at this time last year, according to AAA, as factors converge to create supply shortages not seen since the run-up to the Great Recession in 2008.</p> <p>While the war in Ukraine is playing a major role, with the world shunning Russian oil, it is <a href="#">not the only challenge</a>. The plunge in fuel demand during the pandemic moved producers to cut back on their investments in drilling and refining capacity. The oil and gas sector now finds itself ill equipped to meet the demand of a society getting back on the road. The federal government has exhausted most of the <a href="#">limited tools</a> it has to confront price spikes, such as releasing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.</p>

“The bottom line is, it is going to be an expensive summer,” said Michael Tran, managing director for global energy strategy at RBC Capital Markets.

The warning was echoed this week, albeit in more subdued language, by Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen, who said during a visit to Germany that upward pressure on energy prices is likely to continue in the near term.

As climbing gas prices force Americans to change their spending habits, one thing Americans aren’t doing is driving significantly less. All that driving in this moment of low fuel supply is pushing prices up further. “As we reopen, there is a lot of pent-up demand,” Tran said. “People are willing to pay higher prices to make up for lost travel over the last few years.”

It is a different economic landscape than when gas prices last spiked like this, in the summer of 2008. At the time, Americans had been on a spending frenzy for a while and household savings rates were particularly low. Nonessential driving was a luxury more Americans could not afford then. Gas prices dropped again relatively quickly after a brief surge.

By contrast, household savings right now are at record highs, after people spent less during the coronavirus pandemic. “We were never, as a population, more ready to absorb high gas prices than we are right now,” Tran said. So even as prices keep going up, demand is not easing.

Memorial Day weekend is expected to bring 37.9 million Americans to the road, more than traveled by car over that holiday weekend before the pandemic hit and an increase of 8.5 percent over last year, when gas prices were considerably lower, according to projections by the location data firm Arrivalist. The firm attributes the trend, in part, to Americans forgoing air travel. Plane ticket prices have become prohibitively expensive for many as the airline industry struggles with its own fuel scarcity.

While Arrivalist’s pronouncement that “the American road trip is thriving” is hardly an overstatement, some drivers are stunned by what they are seeing at the pump.

Amanda Laudwein of Silver Spring, Md., was finally able to attend her nephew’s wedding in Death Valley National Park, which spans Nevada and California, this month after it was twice postponed because of the coronavirus. The already expensive trip came with an unexpected cost: The price for a gallon of unleaded at Death Valley’s Furnace Creek gas station, the only place to gas up for miles, was \$8.25.

“It cost us \$120 to fill up our van,” Laudwein said. “It was quite a shock.”

Like many other Americans, though, the 67-year-old has no plans to cut back on her travel. She is looking forward to a cross-country road trip in the fall regardless of whether gas prices are high then. “People have been so careful with their money for so long,” she said. “It is not going to stop us from going where we want. ... I want to see the big prairies.”

Even as old driving habits remain, the high gas prices are forcing Americans to make other adjustments. Walmart this week saw its stocks suffer their biggest decline since 1987 amid an earnings report that acknowledged high gas prices are hammering its business. They are creating unanticipated operational costs for the company and also changing the ways consumers shop, prompting them to consolidate their trips to the store and forgo purchasing items that are not daily necessities.

As they see so much of their money going into their gas tanks, Walmart CEO Doug McMillon said on an earnings call this week, “customers are even more price sensitive right now. ... They’re paying close attention.” He described Walmart shoppers at this moment as “portfolio managers” carefully balancing their budgets and more reluctant to buy something like a piece of sporting equipment unless they see a price drop.

Consumers are also being affected in unexpected ways. A decade-old study found obesity rates tend to go down when gas prices spike — not so much because people abandon their cars to walk or bike but because

they cut out of their budgets services such as housecleaning and gardening, opting to burn the calories doing it themselves.

Older drivers who lived through the gas shortages and accompanying stagflation of the 1970s, meanwhile, are more likely to associate rising prices at the pump with a souring economy and cut back their spending sooner, according to a recent study built on extensive survey data from Gallup.

“I grew up waiting in line to get gas,” said James Cassel, an investment banker in Miami. “Most people don’t remember that.”

While Cassel said he is relieved not to be reliving the long lines at the pump endured during the ’70s, the soaring prices are creating a cascade of headaches for the midsize companies he invests in. Fuel and other costs for manufacturers are mounting so fast, he said, that big-box retailers are easing their rules on when manufacturers can hike the price of products on store shelves.

But that doesn’t mean consumers won’t just turn to buying generics. Cassel is working with a food company struggling to readjust its budget for excessive gas costs and weighing whether it will lose more customers if it increases the price of their product or instead should cut costs by shrinking its size.

Economists and energy analysts warn the prospects are dim that this cycle of increasing energy prices driving ever more inflation will end anytime soon. There are only a few things that could bring it to a close. One is a huge uptick in available oil, gas and renewable energy, which most analysts say is years away. The other is a recession.

A less painful alternative to a recession would be consumers tiring of the high prices and moderately pulling back on their spending on gas and other products, driving down demand for fuel.

“If this were not the covid reopening year, I would say consumers start to pull back when gas hits \$5 a gallon,” Tran said. “But I am reluctant to make those predictions for this summer. A year from now, maybe everyone has had their fill of travel and demand starts to drop.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Global leaders warn of economic dangers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/05/21/g7-slowdown-economy-stagflation/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/05/21/g7-slowdown-economy-stagflation/</a>
GIST	<p>BONN, Germany — The financial leaders of the world’s most powerful countries warned this week of the potential for a global economic slowdown, as the threats caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine continued to multiply.</p> <p>Globally, the war is sending energy and food prices soaring. In the United States, Britain and Europe, central banks determined to curb inflation are moving to hike interest rates, which risks pushing nations into <a href="#">recession</a>. The developing world faces an emerging debt crisis on top of a growing hunger problem sparked by the war.</p> <p>In the United States, as in much of the rest of the world, <a href="#">gasoline prices surged</a> and stock markets plunged, with the S&amp;P 500 index <a href="#">nearing a bear market</a>, closing the week down 18 percent off its early January peak after a late Friday rally. Large retailers, including Target and Walmart, have reported worse than expected earnings and profits this week, blaming higher costs and excess inventory that piled up in response to supply chain problems.</p> <p>“If I had to sum it up: more uncertainty, more inflation, less growth,” François Villeroy de Galhau, the governor of the Bank of France, said of the impact of the war, at a conference here of finance ministers and central bankers from the powerful Group of Seven industrial nations.</p>



After approving trillions of dollars in fiscal stimulus to avert the downturn caused by the [coronavirus](#) pandemic, world economic leaders are now grappling with the threat of “stagflation” — slow, or negative, economic growth, coupled with rising inflation.

The risks abroad may be even greater than in the United States, economists say. In Europe, the euro zone only grew by 0.2 percent in the first quarter of 2022, [suggesting a potential slowdown](#). Some economies within Europe even shrank: Italy’s, for example, contracted slightly in the first quarter of this year.

The war poses a more serious economic threat to Europe than to the United States, particularly given the continent’s dependence on Russian energy, said Jason Furman, a former Obama administration economist. China’s efforts to contain the coronavirus also continue to rattle the global economy, with the latest data from Beijing showing a major decline in retail spending and a drop in gasoline output.

Russia’s economy is doing even worse since the war began, though: The White House says it expects Russia’s gross domestic product to shrink by as much as 15 percent this year due to the sanctions imposed after the invasion, despite Moscow’s profits from rising energy prices.

The World Bank has also warned of a “huge buildup of debt,” particularly in the poorest countries, with debt payments at their highest level in 20 years. Half of low-income countries are now categorized as being at “high risk” of debt distress, according to the Center for Global Development, a Washington-based think tank. Defaults by poorer nations could have ripple effects throughout global financial markets if creditors worldwide go unpaid.

“This is a very difficult economic situation,” Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen said after the conference Wednesday night. Yellen said economic shocks from the war, additional sanctions on Russia and further inflationary pressure were all possible. But she, like many European officials, still held out some hope that policymakers would be able to handle the difficult circumstances.

The global economy, particularly the United States, was projected to grow relatively quickly in 2022 before the war, creating a buffer that may help avert recession. “I think it’s conceivable there could be a soft landing,” Yellen said, referring to the potential of the Federal Reserve to cool inflation without causing a recession.

The G-7 conference yielded limited action to head off these emerging threats to the global economy. In closed-door discussions Thursday and Friday, world leaders resolved to take largely unspecified action on debt management in developing countries, global economic stability and taming inflation. Their most tangible action was to pledge roughly \$20 billion in economic assistance to Ukraine.

The G-7 leaders also resolved in a joint statement to take action related to Sri Lanka’s debt crisis and alleviate food shortages. They pledged as well to keep international markets open, as some countries move to impose export controls to prevent scarce supplies of food and other goods from leaving their countries. World economic leaders in Bonn emphasized that they understood the extent of the dangers, but also acknowledged they may not be prepared to resolve them.

A senior official with the French delegation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the private meetings, said that “the implementation is too slow” and that world leaders must move faster to solve developing nations’ debt challenges.

“The situation of low-income states poses risks to global security and stability of the international financial system,” Christian Lindner, Germany’s finance minister, told reporters. “We will have to deal with the situation.”

Lindner later added: “This is a risk for international financial stability, and it gets even worse if these countries get into financial difficulties [surrounding] food security in their countries.”



That hunger crisis is already painful, and it could get worse as the war drags on. More than 14 million people in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya — half of them children — are “on the verge of starvation,” according to the International Rescue Committee. That number is projected to rise to 20 million by mid-2022 without substantial global action.

During the G-7 meetings, American and French officials were most vocal on the need to address the hunger crisis, according to three people familiar with the meeting, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the closed-door discussions.

“It’s significantly, significantly worse than it was even at the beginning of the covid recession, even though they’re not talking like it is,” said Max Lawson, head of inequality policy at Oxfam International, a humanitarian aid group. “The impact we are seeing already in the developing world is hideous and painful, and it’s happening right now.”

The pressing challenges pushed some of the Western leaders’ other aspirations to the background. Yellen, for instance, has prioritized a reordering of the international tax order to ensure that large corporations pay a global minimum tax. With that revamp stalled amid objections from Poland, it did not dominate discussions at the G-7. Similarly, aggressive action on climate change — long sought by the G-7 countries — also drew less attention at this conference. Many of these issues are expected to be discussed further when G-7 leaders meet later this year.

Eswar Prasad, a Cornell University economics professor who worked at the International Monetary Fund, said national financial leaders are increasingly alarmed by the global economic conditions, citing conversations he has had with international finance ministers and central bank officials. Of particular concern is that policymakers’ main tool to address economic shocks — additional stimulus to increase demand — is largely off the table because of high inflation and high levels of debt.

“The global economy is at a critical juncture, beset by a variety of adverse shocks,” Prasad said. “The degree of anxiety has ratcheted up enormously because increasing confidence of declining growth, adverse supply shocks and rising inflation — all of which substantially reduce the room for policy maneuvers.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Russia tries to rebound as victory fades</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/05/21/russia-ukraine-victory/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/05/21/russia-ukraine-victory/</a>
GIST	<p>The Russian military, mired in a war with no end in sight, is attempting to resuscitate its sputtering offensive in Ukraine, firing commanders, splitting combat units into smaller formations, and redoubling its reliance on artillery and other long-range weapons.</p> <p>The shift comes nearly three months after Russian and American officials alike predicted a quick and decisive victory for Moscow. After the deaths of thousands of Russian soldiers and an avalanche of failures since the invasion began Feb. 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin has narrowed his objectives in a campaign viewed as unsustainable, unrealistic — and likely unwinnable.</p> <p>That assessment is shared by an array of observers, including Western intelligence officials and independent analysts who have tracked the war closely. Russia, said Mikk Marran, director general of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, is losing in Ukraine militarily, politically and morally.</p> <p>“When we look at the battlefield, Russia’s conventional capacity is already overstretched,” Marran said. “The losses in Russian manpower and equipment are not sustainable at the same operations tempo that we have seen so far.”</p> <p>Unless Russia launches a full-scale mobilization of its military, Marran said, it has “no remedy in sight.” And while it appears that “some sense of reality has kicked in” among Russian military leaders, Putin himself remains intent on controlling everything from the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to the western port city of Odessa and Transnistria, a breakaway republic in neighboring Moldova.</p>

“We might be seeing a continuing military campaign that is, to a degree, detached from what is realistic, from what might be called smart or feasible in the long term,” Marran said. The Estonians had long predicted, even before the invasion, that Russia would face significant resistance from the Ukrainians.

As the war grinds on and Russia’s battlefield gains remain “uneven” and “incremental,” according to the Pentagon’s latest assessment, several of its high-ranking commanders have been sacked. Among them, according to the British Ministry of Defense, are Lt. Gen. Serhiy Kisel, who presided over the 1st Guards Tank Army’s failed effort to capture the northeastern city of Kharkiv, and Vice Adm. Igor Osipov, who was in charge of Russia’s Black Sea fleet when Ukrainian forces sank its flagship, the Moskva. The humiliating blow to Russia’s navy was carried out using the Neptune anti-ship missiles that Ukraine makes. Since then, officials in Kyiv have stepped up their requests for similar weapons from Western partners.

Citing the latest U.S. intelligence assessments of the war, a senior Defense Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon, affirmed that “Russian commanders at various levels have been relieved of their duties.” Pentagon officials, this person said, want to be cautious in making predictions about the war’s next phase, but they are encouraged that Ukrainian units have not faced the morale setbacks that plague the Russians.

Russia retains considerable combat power available in Ukraine, the U.S. defense official warned, but “you’ve got to have the will to fight, you have to have good leadership, you have to have command and control.” Russia, he said, is “suffering” as a result of these and other shortcomings.

Meanwhile, sanctions against Russia have caused the country’s transport and shipping logistics to be “practically broken,” Russia’s transport minister said Saturday, a rare admission of problems.

But its defense minister asserted that its military had destroyed a large number of weapons that were supplied to Ukraine by the United States and European countries. A Pentagon spokesperson told The Washington Post that the United States had no comment on Russia’s claim.

Russia also stepped up its political campaign, permanently banning nearly 1,000 Americans, including President Biden and Vice President Harris, from entering the country. The list of those banned included a wide range of officials and citizens, including lawmakers who have died and actor Morgan Freeman.

The United States continues to send billions of dollars in military equipment to Ukraine, including heavy artillery, drones and antitank missiles. President Biden on Saturday signed a \$40 billion package of new military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

Although Putin has deployed more than 100 battalion tactical groups into Ukraine, each numbering between 500 and 800 personnel, they have made little headway in Donbas, U.S. intelligence shows. There is evidence that the Russian military has divided some units, dispatching smaller combat teams into villages and hamlets there. Doing so, the Pentagon assessed, makes sense as Putin pursues smaller localized goals. But Russia has struggled to hold ground, with its forces sometimes ceding control back to Ukraine within days of having seized territory.

In the south, Russia has secured two significant victories, taking control of Mariupol, a major port city, and the smaller city of Kherson. Micholeiv, home to nearly 500,000 people before the war, has been an unattainable objective, however, despite weeks of heavy fighting nearby.

Scott Boston, a former U.S. Army officer who studies the Ukraine war for Rand Corp., said it appears there are massive morale problems within the Russian military, undermining Moscow’s goals. He cited the refusal of some units to carry out orders, as well as Russia’s failure to adequately equip and feed its forces.

“Once it has been abundantly demonstrated that they don’t give a crap about their people, they get it,” Boston said of Russian soldiers. “It’s hard not to notice.”

Russia has seized only a couple kilometers per day in Donbas in recent weeks, according to the Pentagon. At that rate, Boston surmised, the offensive could continue for a year and “there will still be a lot of Ukraine left,” even as Russian military fatalities continue to mount.

“That’s just not a serious proposition,” Boston said.

Russian leaders may realize their military campaign is floundering but still reluctant to acknowledge they are losing the war, he added.

Earlier this month, dozens of Russian combat vehicles were destroyed by Ukrainian forces as the Russians attempted to cross the Siverskyi Donets River in Donbas. The attack is believed to have killed hundreds of Russian troops, and appeared to highlight their continued failings to carry out basic combat maneuvers.

Rob Lee, a Russian military expert and a senior fellow with the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said Russian troops have been bedeviled both by their own tactical blunders and the Ukrainian’s potent capabilities that have contributed to routs like the deadly crossing near Severodonetsk.

River crossings require favorable terrain and construction of pontoon bridges by military engineers. They are inherently dangerous, Lee said, and the Ukrainian military probably anticipated likely crossing points and logged their coordinates for future attacks. Their surveillance drones allowed artillery units to observe where rounds were falling and then guided them onto Russian personnel.

A grave mistake, Lee said, was the failure of Russian commanders to send smaller numbers of troops across the river. Instead, they bunched them together. The mistake cost the 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade dearly, according to an analysis from the Institute of the Study of War, with an estimated 485 casualties and the loss of 80 pieces of equipment.

“It’s an indication there are leadership problems still,” Lee said of the botched attempt to encircle Ukrainian forces nearby.

It’s hard to say how long Russia may keep its offensive going, said Boston, the Rand Corp. analyst. Even after the deaths of thousands of Russian soldiers, he said, Russia could continue to lob artillery rounds from a distance for some time.

Still, the trajectory of the conflict perplexes him. Russia defeated Georgian forces in a five-day war in 2008, but the conflict exposed failures within the Russian military, including an inability to quickly adapt when something goes wrong. Moscow set out to reform its military after that conflict, Boston said, and demonstrated improvement in others.

“You just get this feeling like they’ve abandoned everything they’ve tried to learn over the last 10 years and reverted to an older style that they’re more comfortable with,” Boston said. “Frankly, the Red Army in 1944 was more capable of fire and maneuver than a lot of what we’ve seen from this Russian military, and I don’t understand why.”

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HEADLINE	05/21 Russian Orthodox leader ‘Putin’s altar boy’
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/21/world/europe/kirill-putin-russian-orthodox-church.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/21/world/europe/kirill-putin-russian-orthodox-church.html</a>
GIST	<p>As Russia’s invasion of Ukraine unfolded, Patriarch Kirill I, the leader of the Moscow-based Russian Orthodox Church, had an awkward Zoom meeting with Pope Francis.</p> <p>The two religious leaders had previously worked together to bridge a 1,000-year-old schism between the Christian churches of the East and West. But the meeting, in March, found them on opposing sides of a chasm. Kirill spent 20 minutes reading prepared remarks, echoing the arguments of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia that the war in Ukraine was necessary to purge Nazis and oppose NATO expansion.</p>

Francis was evidently flummoxed. “Brother, we are not clerics of the state,” the pontiff told Kirill, he later recounted to [the Corriere della Sera](#) newspaper, adding that “the patriarch cannot transform himself into Putin’s altar boy.”

Today, Kirill stands apart not merely from Francis, but from much of the world. The leader of about 100 million faithful, Kirill, 75, has staked the fortunes of his branch of Orthodox Christianity on a close and mutually beneficial alliance with Mr. Putin, offering him spiritual cover while his church — and possibly he himself — receives vast resources in return from the Kremlin, allowing him to extend his influence in the Orthodox world.

To his critics, the arrangement has made Kirill far more than another apparatchik, oligarch or enabler of Mr. Putin, but an essential part of the nationalist ideology at the heart of the Kremlin’s expansionist designs.

Kirill has called Mr. Putin’s long tenure “[a miracle of God](#),” and has characterized the war as a just defense against liberal conspiracies to infiltrate Ukraine with “[gay parades](#).”

“All of our people today must wake up — wake up — understand that a special time has come on which the historical fate of our people may depend,” he said in one April sermon. “We have been raised throughout our history to love our fatherland, and we will be ready to protect it, as only Russians can defend their country,” he said to soldiers in another.

Kirill’s role is so important that European officials [have included him](#) on a list of individuals they plan to target in an upcoming — and still in flux — round of sanctions against Russia, according to people who have seen the list.

Such a censure would be an extraordinary measure against a religious leader, its closest antecedent perhaps being the [sanctions the United States leveled](#) against Iran’s [supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#).

For more than a decade, Kirill’s critics have argued that his formative experience of religious repression during the Soviet era had tragically led him into Mr. Putin’s empowering and ultimately inescapable embrace, turning the Russian Orthodox Church under Kirill’s leadership into a corrupted spiritual branch of an authoritarian state.

Sanctions, while likely to be seen within Russia and its church as merely further evidence of hostility from the Godless West, have the potential to place a finger on the scale of the shifting balance of power within the often bitterly divided Orthodox Church.

“This is new,” said Enzo Bianchi, an Italian Catholic prelate who first met Kirill in the late 1970s at conferences he organized to promote reconciliation with the Orthodox Church.

Father Bianchi worried that imposing sanctions on a religious leader could set a dangerous precedent for “political interference in the church.” Still, he considered Kirill’s alliance with Mr. Putin disastrous.

All of which has raised the question of why Kirill has so thoroughly aligned himself with [Russia’s dictator](#).

Part of the answer, close observers and those who have known Kirill say, has to do with Mr. Putin’s success in bringing the patriarch to heel, as he has other important players in the Russian power structure. But it also stems from Kirill’s own ambitions.

Kirill has in recent years aspired to expand his church’s influence, pursuing an ideology consistent with Moscow being a “Third Rome,” a reference to a 15th-century idea of Manifest Destiny for the Orthodox Church, in which Mr. Putin’s Russia would become the spiritual center of the true church after Rome and Constantinople.

It is a grand project that dovetails neatly with — and inspired — Mr. Putin’s mystically tinged imperialism of a “Russkiy Mir,” or a greater Russian world.

“He managed to sell the concept of traditional values, the concept of Russkiy Mir, to Putin, who was looking for conservative ideology,” said Sergei Chapnin, a senior fellow in Orthodox Christian studies at Fordham University who worked with Kirill in the Moscow Patriarchate.

Born Vladimir Mikhailovich Gundyayev at the end of World War II, Kirill grew up, like Mr. Putin, in a small St. Petersburg apartment during the Soviet era. But while Mr. Putin has painted himself as a brawling urchin, Kirill came from a line of churchmen, including a grandfather who suffered in the gulags for his faith.

“When he returned, he told me: ‘Don’t be afraid of anything but God,’” Kirill once said on Russian state television.

Like practically all elite Russian clerics of the era, Kirill is believed to have collaborated with the K.G.B., where Mr. Putin learned his early trade.

Kirill quickly became someone to watch in Russian Orthodox circles, representing the church in 1971 at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, which allowed him to reach out to Western clerics from other Christian denominations.

“He was always open to dialogue,” said Father Bianchi, who remembered Kirill as a thin monk attending his conferences.

Traditionalists were initially wary of Kirill’s reformist style — he held megachurch-like events in stadiums and amplified his message, and popularity, on a weekly television show, starting in 1994.

But there were also early signs of a deep conservatism. Kirill was at times appalled by Protestant efforts to admit women to the priesthood and by what he depicted as the West’s use of human rights to “[dictatorially](#)” force gay rights and other anti-Christian values on traditional societies.

In 2000, the year Mr. Putin took power in Moscow, Kirill published a [mostly overlooked article](#) calling the promotion of traditional Christian values in the face of liberalism “a matter of preservation of our national civilization.”

In December 2008, after his [predecessor Aleksy II died](#), Kirill spent two months touring — critics say campaigning — in the Russian monasteries that kept the flame of conservative doctrine. It worked, and in 2009, he inherited a church in the middle of a post-Soviet reawakening.

Kirill gave a major speech calling for a “Symphonia” approach to church and state divisions, with the Kremlin looking after earthly concerns and the church interested in the divine.

At the end of 2011, he lent his voice to criticism against fraudulent parliamentary elections by defending the “lawful negative reaction” to corruption and said that it would be “a very bad sign” if the Kremlin did not pay attention.

Soon afterward, reports of luxurious apartments owned by Kirill and his family surfaced in the Russian media. Other unconfirmed rumors of billions of dollars in secret bank accounts, Swiss chalets and yachts began to swirl.

A [news website](#) dug up a photograph from 2009 in which Kirill wore a Breguet [Réveil du Tsar model](#) watch, worth about \$30,000, a marker of membership to the Russian elite.

After his church sought to airbrush the timepiece out of existence, and Kirill denied ever wearing it, its remaining reflection on a polished table prompted an [embarrassing apology from the church](#).

The Rev. Cyril Hovorun, an Orthodox priest who was a personal assistant to Kirill for a decade, said the tarnishing of the patriarch's reputation was interpreted by Kirill as a message from the Kremlin not to cross the state.

Kirill drastically changed direction, giving full support and ideological shape to Moscow's ambitions.

"He realized that this is a chance for the church to step in and to provide the Kremlin with ideas," said Father Hovorun, who resigned in protest at that time. "The Kremlin suddenly adopted the language of Kirill, of the church, and began speaking about traditional values" and how "Russian society needs to rise again to grandeur."

Father Hovorun, now a professor of ecclesiology, international relations and ecumenism at University College Stockholm, said Kirill took Mr. Putin's talk of being a believer with a grain of salt.

"For him, the collaboration with the Kremlin is a way to protect some kind of freedom of the church," he said. "Ironically, however, it seems that under his tenure as the patriarch, the church ended up in a situation of captivity."

Steadily, the line between church and state blurred.

In 2012, when members of the feminist punk band Pussy Riot staged a "Punk Prayer" in Moscow's Christ the Saviour Cathedral to protest the entanglement of Mr. Putin and Kirill, Kirill seemed to take the lead in pushing for the group's jailing. He also explicitly supported Mr. Putin's presidential bid.

His church reaped tens of millions of dollars to reconstruct churches and state financing for religious schools. The St. Basil the Great Foundation of Konstantin Malofeev, a Russian Orthodox oligarch close to Mr. Putin, paid for the renovation of the Moscow headquarters of the church's department of external church relations, which Kirill used to run.

Kirill raised taxes significantly, and with no transparency, on his own churches, while his own personal assets remained classified. Mr. Chapnin, who had been personally appointed by Kirill to run the church's official journal, began criticizing him and was fired in 2015.

Like Mr. Putin's Kremlin, Kirill's church flexed its muscles abroad, lavishing funds on the Orthodox Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch, based in Syria. Those investments have paid off.

This month, the Antioch Patriarchate publicly opposed sanctions against Kirill, giving a predicate to Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, arguably the closest European leader to Mr. Putin, to this week vow that he would block any sanctions against Kirill.

But for Kirill, Moscow's status in the Orthodox world is perhaps of primary importance.

The Great Schism of 1054 split Christianity between the Western church, loyal to the pope in Rome, and the Eastern church in Constantinople. In the ensuing centuries, the Constantinople patriarch, with his seat in present-day Istanbul, maintained a first among equals status among Eastern Orthodox churches, but others became influential, including Moscow.

Moscow's invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014 led the already unhappy Ukrainian Orthodox Church to break from centuries of jurisdiction under Moscow, costing it about a third of its parishes. Recognition of the Ukrainian church by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople fueled tensions between Moscow and Constantinople.



<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>The internal church war has also spilled into the military one, with Moscow using the protection of the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine who remain loyal to Kirill as part of the pretext for invasion.</p> <p>Mr. Putin’s war and Kirill’s support for it now appear to have diminished their shared grand project. Hundreds of priests in Ukraine have accused Kirill of “heresy.” The threat of European Union sanctions looms. Reconciliation with the Western church is off the table.</p> <p>Yet Kirill has not wavered, calling for public support of the war so that Russia can “repel its enemies, both external and internal.” And he smiled broadly with other loyalists in Mr. Putin’s inner circle on May 9 during the Victory Day parade in Moscow.</p> <p>Some say he has no choice if he wants to survive.</p> <p>“It’s a kind of mafia concept,” Mr. Chapnin said. “If you’re in, you’re in. You can’t get out.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Root Haiti misery: reparations to enslavers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/20/world/americas/haiti-history-colonized-france.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/20/world/americas/haiti-history-colonized-france.html</a>
GIST	<p>DONDON, Haiti — Adrienne Present steps into the thin forest beside her house and plucks the season’s first coffee cherries, shining like red marbles in her hands.</p> <p>The harvest has begun.</p> <p>Each morning, she lights a coal fire on the floor of her home in the dark. Electricity has never come to her patch of northern Haiti.</p> <p>She sets out a pot of water, fetched from the nearest source — a mountain spring sputtering into a farmer’s field. Then she adds the coffee she has dried, winnowed, roasted and pounded into powder with a large mortar called a <i>pilon</i>, the way she was taught as a child.</p> <p>Coffee has been the fulcrum of life here for almost three centuries, since enslaved people cut the first French coffee plantations into the mountainsides. Back then, this was not Haiti, but Saint-Domingue — the biggest supplier of coffee and sugar consumed in Parisian kitchens and Hamburg coffee houses. The colony made many French families fabulously rich. It was also, many historians say, the world’s most brutal.</p> <p>Ms. Present’s ancestors put an end to that, taking part in the modern world’s first successful slave revolution in 1791 and establishing an independent nation in 1804 — decades before Britain outlawed slavery or the Civil War broke out in America.</p> <p>But for generations after independence, <a href="#">Haitians were forced to pay the descendants of their former slave masters</a>, including the Empress of Brazil; the son-in-law of the Russian Emperor Nicholas I; Germany’s last imperial chancellor; and Gaston de Galliffet, the French general known as the “butcher of the Commune” for crushing an insurrection in Paris in 1871.</p> <p>The burdens continued well into the 20th century. The wealth Ms. Present’s ancestors coaxed from the ground brought wild profits for a French bank that helped finance the Eiffel Tower, Crédit Industriel et Commercial, and its investors. They controlled Haiti’s treasury from Paris for decades, and the bank eventually became part of one of Europe’s largest financial conglomerates.</p> <p><a href="#">Haiti’s riches lured Wall Street</a>, too, delivering big margins for the institution that ultimately became Citigroup. It elbowed out the French and helped spur the American invasion of Haiti — one of the longest military occupations in United States history.</p>



Yet most coffee farmers in Ms. Present's patch of Haiti have never had running water or septic tanks. They have crude outhouses and cook their *diri ak pwa* — rice and beans — over campfires. They deliver their coffee harvests on the backs of thin horses with palm-leaf saddles and rope reins, or hoist the loads on their heads to carry them, by foot, for miles on dirt roads.

Many, like Ms. Present's husband, Jean Pierrelus Valcin, can't read, having never "sat on a school bench," as the Haitian Creole saying goes. All six of the couple's children started school, but none finished, given the steep fees charged in Haiti, where the vast majority of education is private because the country never built more than a tiny public school system.

"There is nothing here," said Mr. Valcin, who is losing his eyesight but can't afford to visit a specialist. "Our children have to leave the country to find jobs."

He used a term you hear often in Haiti — *mizè*. More than poverty, it means misery.

Violence. Tragedy. Hunger. Underdevelopment. These bywords have clung to Haiti for more than a century. Kidnappings. Outbreaks. Earthquakes. The president assassinated — this time in his bedroom.

How is it possible, many ask, that Haiti shares an island with the Dominican Republic, with its underground subway system, health care coverage, public schools, teeming resorts and impressive stretches of economic growth?

Corruption is the usual explanation, and not without reason: [Haiti's leaders have historically ransacked the country for their own gain](#), legislators have spoken openly on the radio about accepting bribes and oligarchs sit atop lucrative monopolies, paying few taxes. Transparency International ranks it among the most corrupt nations in the world.

But another story is rarely taught or acknowledged: The first people in the modern world to free themselves from slavery and create their own nation were forced to pay for their freedom yet again — in cash.

Twenty-one years after Haiti's revolutionary heroes declared their country's independence, swearing to die before being put back in chains or living under French domination again, a squadron of French warships — equipped with some 500 cannons — loomed off Haiti's coastline.

The king's envoy, the Baron of Mackau, issued a daunting ultimatum: Hand over a staggering sum in reparations to Haiti's former slave masters, or face another war.

The Haitians had ample reason for alarm. Two decades earlier, Napoleon had tried to destroy them, sending one of the largest expeditions of warships ever dispatched by France, with his brother-in-law at the helm. The Haitians won and declared independence. Napoleon lost more troops than he did at Waterloo and withdrew.

But rich French colonists continued to press to reconquer the territory, and they found another sympathetic ear when the Bourbon monarchy returned to power. One minister of the navy, a former colonist and prominent defender of slavery, even drafted a new plan to put Haitians back in bondage or "crush them" with a still larger army.

No country could be expected to come to Haiti's defense. The world powers had frozen it out, refusing to officially acknowledge its independence. American lawmakers in particular did not want enslaved people in their own country to be inspired by Haiti's self-liberation and rise up.

So, Haiti's president, eager for the trade and security of international recognition, bowed to France's demands. With that, Haiti set another precedent: It became the world's first and only country where the descendants of enslaved people paid reparations to the descendants of their masters — for generations.

It is often called the “independence debt.” But that is a misnomer. It was a ransom.

The amount was far beyond Haiti’s meager means. Even the first installment was about six times the government’s income that year, based on official receipts documented by the 19th-century Haitian historian Beaubrun Ardouin.

But that was the point, and part of the plan. The French king had given the baron a second mission: to ensure the former colony took out a loan from young French banks to make the payments.

This became known as Haiti’s “double debt” — the ransom and the loan to pay it — a stunning load that boosted the fledgling Parisian international banking system and helped cement Haiti’s path into poverty and underdevelopment. According to Ardouin’s records, the bankers’ commissions alone exceeded the Haitian government’s total revenues that year.

And that was only the beginning. The double debt helped push Haiti into a cycle of debts that hobbled the country for more than 100 years, draining away much of its revenue and chopping away at its ability to build the essential institutions and infrastructure of an independent nation. Generations after enslaved people rebelled and created the first free Black nation in the Americas, their children were forced to work, sometimes for little or even no pay, for the benefit of others — first the French, then the Americans, then their own dictators.

Two centuries after French warships blew their terrifying cannons from Port-au-Prince’s harbor to celebrate the debt, the echoes from that moment still wash across the country in its slums, bare hospitals, crumbling roads and empty stomachs, even in the countryside, once considered the most lucrative and productive in the world.

“This was a poor country that was always impoverished after 300 years of exploitation,” Cedieu Joseph said over the buzz of cicadas in his coffee garden in Dondon, the town in northern Haiti where Ms. Present lives. He manages a coffee cooperative named after a Haitian revolutionary hero from the area, and calls the so-called independence debt a modern whip, wielded by France to punish its former colony for wanting, and winning, its freedom.

“The slaves fought for our independence,” he said. “To make them pay for that independence again, it was setting up another form of slavery.”

Since then, the double debt has largely faded into history. France has repeatedly downplayed, distorted or buried it. Only a few scholars have examined it deeply. No [detailed accounting of how much the Haitians actually paid](#) has ever been done, historians say. Even in Haiti, debates over its effect on the country’s economy, development and political destiny continue today.

The New York Times spent months sifting through thousands of pages of original government documents, some of them centuries old and rarely, if ever, reviewed by historians. We scoured libraries and archives in Haiti, France and the United States to study the double debt and its effect on Haiti, financially and politically.

In what leading historians say is a first, we tabulated how much money Haitians paid to the families of their former masters and to the French banks and investors who held that first loan to Haiti, not just in official government payments on the double debt but also in interest and late fees, year after year, for decades.

We found that Haitians paid about \$560 million in today’s dollars. But that doesn’t nearly capture the true loss. If that money had simply stayed in the Haitian economy and grown at the nation’s actual pace over the last two centuries — rather than being shipped off to France, without any goods or services being provided in return — it would have added a staggering \$21 billion to Haiti over time, even accounting for its notorious corruption and waste.

For perspective, that's much bigger than Haiti's entire economy in 2020.

We shared our findings and analysis with 15 leading economists and financial historians who study developing economies and how public debt affects their growth. All but one either agreed with our \$21 billion estimate, said it was squarely within the range of possibilities, or considered it conservative. A few suggested additional ways of modeling, which mostly showed far bigger long-term losses for Haiti.

The reason is simple: Had the money not been handed over to Haiti's former slaveholders, it would have been spent in the Haitian economy — by the coffee farmers, laundresses, masons and others who earned it. It would have gone to shops, school fees or medical bills. It would have helped businesses grow, or seeded new ones. Some of the money would have gone to the government, possibly even to build bridges, sewers and water pipes.

That spending pays off over time, boosting a country's economic growth. It's impossible to know with any certainty what Haiti's economy would have looked like, and given the history of self-dealing by officials, some historians say the needs of poor farmers in places like Dondon would never have been priorities anyway.

But several others said that without the burden of the double debt, Haiti might have grown at the same rate as its neighbors across Latin America. "There is no reason why a Haiti free of the French burden could not have," said the financial historian Victor Bulmer-Thomas, who studies the region's economies. André A. Hofman, an expert on Latin America's economic development, also called this scenario "very reasonable."

In that case, the loss to Haiti is astounding: about \$115 billion over time, or eight times the size of its economy in 2020.

Put another way, if Haiti had not been forced to pay its former slave masters, one team of international scholars [recently estimated](#), the country's per capita income in 2018 could have been almost six times as large — about the same as in its next-door neighbor, the Dominican Republic.

They called the burden imposed on Haiti "perhaps the single most odious sovereign debt in history."

The Times calculated the impact of the double debt alone — the reparations to colonists and the initial loan to pay them.

But Haiti's troubles didn't end there.

The double debt helped set off a cascade of privation, budgetary shortfalls and onerous foreign loans that shaped the country into the 20th century and beyond.

Though Haiti's government made the last payments connected to its former slaveholders in 1888, the debt was far from settled: To finish paying it off, Haiti borrowed from other foreign lenders who, in league with a few self-serving Haitian officials indifferent to their people's suffering, laid claim to a significant share of the nation's income for decades to come.

Depleted after decades of paying France, Haiti took out even more loans after that. By 1911, \$2.53 out of every \$3 Haiti took in from coffee taxes, its most important source of revenue, went to paying debts held by French investors, according to Gusti-Klara Gaillard and Alain Turnier, Haitian historians whose accounts are consistent with ledgers found in the diplomatic archives in suburban Paris.

That left precious little to run a country, much less build one.

In some years of the United States occupation, which began in 1915, more of Haiti's budget went to paying the salaries and expenses of the American officials who controlled its finances than to providing health care to the entire nation of around two million people.

Even after the Americans relinquished fiscal control in the late 1940s, Haitian farmers were living on a diet that was “often close to the starvation level,” United Nations officials reported. As few as one in six children went to school.

Debt still shrouded the country. In the 1940s, Haitian children lucky enough to attend school were asked to bring coins to class to finish paying the avalanche of loans that had weighed on their nation since its infancy.

Little of this history is recognized by France. The reparations Haitians were forced to pay their former masters for generations are not covered in French schools, researchers say. And when a Haitian president began loudly raising the subject, the French government scoffed and tried to squelch it.

In 2003, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former priest who became the first democratically elected president after decades of dictatorship, launched a campaign demanding that France repay the money it had extracted, with television ads, street banners and a legal team putting together the elements of an international lawsuit. The French government responded by assembling a public commission to study relations between the two countries, but quietly instructed it “not to say a word in favor of restitution,” Thierry Burkard, the French ambassador to Haiti at the time, recently told The New York Times in an interview.

The commission dismissed Mr. Aristide’s claims as the ploys of a demagogue and portrayed the independence debt as a “treaty” between Haiti and France — making only passing mention of the French warships looming off the Haitian coast to enforce the demand in an annex to a 2004 report.

A month later, the French government helped remove Mr. Aristide from power, saying it was trying to prevent Haiti, which was heaving with turmoil, from spinning into civil war. But while French officials have long said the restitution claim was not the reason for Mr. Aristide’s ouster, Mr. Burkard acknowledged it was “probably a bit about that, too.”

“It would have set a precedent” for many other countries, he said.

Despite Mr. Aristide’s removal, the issue has not gone away. In May 2015, François Hollande, France’s president, stunned an audience gathered for the opening of a memorial center on the slave trade in Guadeloupe when he referred to Haiti’s payments to its former slave masters as “the ransom of independence.”

“When I come to Haiti,” he continued, “I will, for my part, pay off the debt we have.”

The crowd, which included Haiti’s president at the time, instantly stood up in loud applause.

“People cried, African heads of state cried,” said Michaëlle Jean, the Haitian-born former secretary-general of the International Organization of la Francophonie, who was present at the speech. “It was immense.”

The excitement was short-lived.

A few hours later, Mr. Hollande’s aides clarified to news organizations that he was speaking only of the “moral debt” France owed to Haiti, not of any financial compensation. The French government maintains the same position today.

“France must face up to its history,” the French Foreign Ministry told The Times, expressing “solidarity” with Haiti. Even so, it has not calculated how much money France received from Haiti over generations.

“That’s the job of historians,” the ministry said.

Haiti's payments to former colonists were supposed to go solely to individual property owners, not to the French government itself. Yet the state ended up with a cut anyway. The Times unearthed several government documents from the early 1900s revealing that 2 million francs from the descendants of Haiti's enslaved people, or \$8.5 million in today's currency, landed in French state coffers. (France's treasury declined to comment, saying its archives dated from only 1919.)

Some of the families that received payments over decades remain European royalty and French aristocracy. Their descendants include Maximilian Margrave of Baden, a first cousin of Prince Charles; the French businessman Ernest-Antoine Seillière de Laborde, who once ran the country's powerful association of big businesses; and Michel de Ligne, the Belgian prince whose ancestors were close to Catherine the Great and built a castle known as the "Belgian Versailles," where hundreds of Jewish children were hidden during the Holocaust.

The Times tracked down and spoke to more than 30 descendants of families that received payments under Haiti's independence debt. Most said they had never heard of it.

"This is part of my family history I never knew," Nicolaus Herzog von Leuchtenberg, the Duke of Leuchtenberg and a sixth-generation descendant of Joséphine de Beauharnais, Napoleon's first wife, said in a phone interview from Germany.

The debt was not shouldered by all Haitians equally. The country's small elite, who today live in gated mansions and travel regularly for vacations in Paris and Miami, remained largely untouched. It was the poor who paid — and continue to pay, many argue, because the country has never had enough schools, clean water, electricity and other basics.

"As of today, we suffer the consequences of the debt," said Dr. Francis Saint-Hubert, a doctor who worked on Mr. Aristide's restitution campaign and teaches at the Aristide Foundation for Democracy's medical school in Haiti. On a recent visit to a public hospital, he found the cupboards bare of the most elemental supplies, like blood pressure cuffs, or even thermometers.

"We are still paying," he said, "and sometimes with our lives."

The documents reviewed by The Times show how that debt came to be, and how its impact stretched across history. The earliest records, in fact, date to a time before the nation of Haiti even existed.

### **The most profitable colony in the world**

During slavery, Haiti brimmed with such wealth that its largest and most important city, Cap-Français, was known as the "Paris of the Antilles," bursting with bookstores, cafes, gardens, elegant public squares and bubbling fountains. The Comédie du Cap sat 1,500 people and put on 200 performances a year — many direct from Paris — as well as regular dances and balls. The town's slate-roofed houses, with their whitewashed walls and courtyards, rented for four times the price of a ground-floor apartment in central Paris, according to the historian John Garrigus. The harbor, choked with garbage today, was perennially full of ocean-worthy sailing ships.

All this happened quickly. The mountainous colony, tucked into the western part of the island of Hispaniola, was colonized by France later than most of the Caribbean, yet in less than a century its plantations were the leading suppliers of sugar to Europe. Only in the late 1730s were the colony's first coffee plantations cut into the mountainsides in Dondon, where Ms. Present still farms today.

By the late 1780s, the colony of Saint-Domingue alone had absorbed 40 percent of the entire trans-Atlantic slave trade. Many kidnapped Africans died within a few years of being pulled from the putrid, crowded bowels of slave ships and branded with their new masters' names or initials.

The survivors made up an astounding 90 percent of the colony's total population, kept in line by hunger, exhaustion and public acts of extreme violence. Crowds of colonists gathered in one of the island's fancy squares to watch them be burned alive or broken, bone by bone, on a wheel.

Sadistic punishments were so common they were given names like the “four post” or the “ladder,” historians note. There was even a technique of stuffing enslaved people with gunpowder to blow them up like cannonballs, described as burning “a little powder in the arse,” according to French historian Pierre de Vaissière, who cited a 1736 letter from a colonist.

“O land of mine, is there any other on this planet whose soil has been more soaked in human blood?” asked the Baron de Vastey, a government officer in the northern part of Haiti in his 1814 work “The Colonial System Unveiled.”

“To France’s shame, not a single one of the monsters,” he wrote, singling out plantation owners and their managers by name, has experienced “even the slightest punishment for his crimes.”

France strengthened its laws forbidding the mutilation or killing of enslaved people in the 1780s, a sign of how openly cruel some plantation owners had become. A few years later, 14 enslaved people from a remote coffee plantation made the long trip to the Cap-Français courthouse to test the new laws. Their master, a rich planter named Nicolas Lejeune, had tortured two women whom investigators found in chains, their legs charred from burns. They died soon after, yet Lejeune was acquitted.

The only thing that will prevent “the slave from stabbing the master” is “the absolute power he has over him,” Lejeune wrote to the prosecutor, according to historian Malick Ghachem. “Remove this brake and the slave will dare anything.”

The enslaved people of Saint-Domingue rose up late one August evening in 1791, starting what some historians call the largest slave uprising in history.

Little documentation about the early days of the revolution exists. One enslaved person confessed, most likely under torture, that a clandestine meeting took place in the woods, attended by 200 others from across the north. The rebels later held a ceremony, vowing to destroy their oppressors and the tools of their subjugation.

They did it with whatever weapons they could grab or fashion and — most effectively — with fire, burning sugar cane fields and plantation buildings. The cloud of black smoke that engulfed Cap-Français made the sky glow after sunset like the northern aurora, one French surgeon recounted.

Within two weeks, every plantation within 50 miles of Cap-Français was reduced to ash and the rebels, many dressed in rags, organized into three armies, with hundreds on horseback. One leader became infamous for wielding the same cruel punishments slaveholders had used, whipping colonists hundreds of times and hacking off their hands.

After two years, the French commissioners of the colony announced that all enslaved people would be free and become French citizens. It was practical — they needed recruits to defend the colony against attacks, including from Britain or Spain, which controlled the eastern side of Hispaniola. But it was also ideological, some historians say, reflecting the revolutionary ideals that had erupted back home.

Soon after Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were guillotined in France, the revolutionary government abolished slavery in 1794, not just in Saint-Domingue but in all French colonies. The historian Laurent Dubois calls that the most dramatic change brought about by the French Revolution, yet for enslaved people of Saint-Domingue, he says, “it was only the end of the beginning of a long struggle for freedom.”

Napoleon, who seized power in 1799, had very different views on slavery. In December 1801, he dispatched some 50 ships to Saint-Domingue to reimpose the French colonial empire and “rid us of these gilded Africans,” as he put it to the commander, his brother-in-law. Napoleon reinstated the slave trade in France’s other colonies and thought it would take three months to vanquish the Haitians.

Instead, as many as 50,000 French soldiers, sailors and colonists died, according to the historian Philippe Girard. Almost two years later, the ragged remains of Napoleon's forces pulled out of the charred harbor of Cap-Français — later renamed Cap-Haïtien.

The declaration of independence for Haiti — the Indigenous name that revolutionaries reclaimed for their country — offered enslaved people hope from Brazil to South Carolina, noted the historian Julius S. Scott.

But for their masters, it set a chilling precedent.

“The peace of 11 states in this union will not permit the fruits of a successful Negro insurrection,” Senator Thomas Benton of Missouri told his fellow lawmakers in Congress, explaining why the United States should not recognize Haiti's independence. “It will not permit Black consuls and ambassadors to establish themselves in our cities, and to parade through our country.”

Or, as Senator John Berrien of Georgia said, official relations with Haiti would “introduce a moral contagion” that would make even the most horrifying pestilence seem “light and insignificant.”

### **The ultimatum**

Haiti knew the French would return, a premonition that still towers in stone over the country from a green peak above Dondon's coffee farms. It is called the Citadelle, the largest military fortress in the Caribbean and arguably Haiti's most important building. Its gray walls, now patched with orange lichen, are as thick as 16 feet and as high as 147 feet. From one angle, they sweep like the prow of a monstrous ocean tanker bearing down on any flimsy vessels below. More than 160 cannons point threateningly from its openings and ledges.

Some 20,000 peasants — conscripted by the new Haitian government — built it in just 14 years, beginning shortly after independence. It was just one of 30 forts ordered up by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Haiti's first ruler, in preparation for what he called “an eventual offensive return of the French.”

That day finally came, 21 years after independence.

On July 3, 1825, a French warship, accompanied by two other ships, sailed into the port of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital.

They were sent by Charles X, the newly installed king of France, to enforce an ordinance: In exchange for 150 million francs, and an enormous reduction in custom taxes on French goods, France would recognize its former colony's independence.

If the Haitian government did not accept the ordinance, exactly as written, the Baron of Mackau, Ange René Armand, had orders to declare Haiti an “enemy of France” and blockade its ports. In his own handwritten account, the baron said he had been instructed to launch military operations that “can no longer be stopped.”

“I am not a negotiator,” he told Haiti's president, Jean-Pierre Boyer, according to the baron's account, which was published in France this year. “I am only a soldier.”

Just up the coast, 11 more French warships waited. One of the Haitian president's top generals rushed a letter to him in the middle of the talks, saying his men in the coastal mountains northwest of Port-au-Prince had spotted the French fleet.

The idea of payment had been raised before, first by the Haitian president in 1814 as a way of fending off what many saw as an imminent French invasion. Frozen out of trade with France and at times the United States, Boyer himself had discussed the idea, in exchange for international recognition of Haiti's independence.



But those were diplomatic negotiations. Now, a crippling amount was being demanded under threat of war. The French demand was “excessive” and beyond “all our calculations,” Boyer said, according to the baron’s account.

But after three days of meetings, he relented.

Some historians dispute the notion that Boyer accepted the demands merely to protect his people from war. Alex Dupuy, a Haitian American scholar, argues that the president wanted to enshrine the property rights of the Haitian elite who had taken over land, and knew the costs would be offloaded onto the poor masses. “One has to understand the pressure France put on Haiti, but also the interests of the Haitian ruling class,” he said.

The ordinance broke new ground. Typically, historians say, war reparations are imposed on the losers. Victorious European nations forced France to pay them after the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, a decade before the Baron of Mackau set foot in Haiti. After World War I, Allied nations imposed huge penalties on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles, fueling bitter resentment that carried into World War II.

But in this case, the victors — who had first thrown off their shackles, and then defended themselves by beating back Napoleon’s forces — were the ones to pay. Instead of remedying, or even acknowledging, the abuses of slavery, the ordinance focused on the financial losses of the former masters.

In the coming decades, some nations, like Britain, abolished slavery and paid slaveholders for their losses, while also requiring newly freed people to continue working for their former masters for a number of years without pay. As the Swiss historian Frédérique Beauvois points out, the United States was an outlier: It freed people after the Civil War, and granted no compensation to their enslavers.

But Haiti’s case was unique. The Haitians had already freed themselves.

In the other cases, governments paid slaveholders to ease their opposition to abolition laws and to ensure that the economy would not crash, she said. But with Haiti, France demanded payment from those who had been in chains.

“It was to punish them,” Ms. Beauvois said. “It was vengeance.”

The price tag was huge. In 1803, France sold Louisiana to the United States for 80 million francs — just over half what it demanded from Haiti. And back then, Louisiana encompassed a large sweep of the continent, stretching across all or parts of 15 modern states. Haiti was 1/77 the size.

The Haitian government didn’t have enough money to pay even the first of five installments.

So the baron brought three Haitian diplomats with him back to France. There, they sealed a 30 million franc loan. But after the group of bankers, which included the Rothschilds, took its commissions, Haiti got only 24 million francs.

Instead of 150 million, Haiti suddenly owed 156 million, plus interest.

It was one of the first of many loans by French bankers to foreign governments that transformed Paris into a hub of international finance. And it became a prototype for controlling colonies after their independence, fulfilling the vision of the baron, who later became France’s minister of the navy and colonies.

“Under such a regime,” he wrote, “Haiti would undoubtedly become a highly profitable and costless province of France.”

### **‘Reduced by Death’**

In Paris, the king named a commission to sort through more than 27,000 demands for compensation that flooded in decades after the Haitian revolution.

The biggest single payout went to the family of one of the biggest slaveholders in Haiti's history, Jean-Joseph de Laborde, a banker for Louis XV, according to Oliver Glied, a German historian who has created [a database of former colonists](#).

In the late 18th century, Laborde shipped nearly 10,000 Africans to Haiti in his slave boats and had more than 2,000 enslaved people on his plantations there, many of whom died. French revolutionaries beheaded him in 1794, but two of his children, Alexandre and Nathalie, received about 350,000 francs, or about \$1.7 million today, for his claimed losses in Haiti.

Officially, former colonists got just one-tenth of what they lost. But Laborde's son, Alexandre, a fervent abolitionist, said in an 1833 parliamentary debate that the compensation payments were so large they actually exceeded the plantation owners' losses.

"With half of the compensation I would receive, I could buy the three houses I owned," he told lawmakers.

By law, the commission could compensate Frenchmen only for lost real estate. But it was clear that "slaves were almost the only value of Saint-Domingue" and should be part of the calculus, Jean-Marie Pardessus, an official who helped set the rules on compensation, told his fellow lawmakers.

What little is known about the commission's decisions comes from a 990-page volume of its original handwritten notes discovered in the French archives in Roubaix in 2006.

Some former colonists submitted letters from slave ship captains and slave merchants as proof of the kidnapped Africans they had purchased on the eve of the revolution. Conversely, commissioners subtracted the value of enslaved people colonists took with them when fleeing.

In 1828, the commission heard from Philippine Louise Geneviève de Cocherel. Her father, the recently deceased Marquis of Cocherel, had owned six properties, including a sugar plantation and a coffee plantation.

Cocherel had been singled out by the Baron de Vastey in his treatise on the horrors of slavery, but in flowing handwriting, the commissioner's note taker recorded the marquis's losses with bureaucratic dispassion:

His sugar and cotton plantations had been "reduced by death" to 220 enslaved people, valued at 3,425 francs per head.

The coffee plantation's slaves had been "reduced to 40 by death," their worth put at 3,250 francs each. On the ranch, the seven enslaved people had been "reduced to" six, worth 2,500 per head.

In 1789, before the slave rebellion, the marquis bought 21 recently kidnapped Africans before leaving for France. But he didn't indicate where they were put to work, so the commission valued them at an average rate, down to the cent: 3,366.66 francs.

In the end, it awarded Cocherel's daughter, a newly married marquise, average annual payments of 1,450 francs, or about \$280 in the 1860s, for dozens of years, according to government publications of the commission's decisions.

By contrast, coffee farmers in Haiti were earning about \$76 a year in 1863, Edmond Paul, a Haitian economist and politician, wrote at the time — barely enough to cover one meal a day of "the least substantive foods."

It was reminiscent, he said, of slavery.

**'Ready to Fight'**

The Haitian government ran out of money right away. To finish its first payment, it emptied its state coffers, sending it all to France on a French ship, sealed in bags inside nailed crates reinforced with iron bands. That left no money for public services.

The French government threatened war to collect the rest.

“An army of 500,000 men is ready to fight,” wrote the French foreign minister in 1831 to his consul in Haiti, “and behind this imposing force, a reserve of two million.”

In response, President Boyer passed a law commanding every Haitian to be ready to defend the country. He built the leafy suburb of Pétionville, now the bastion of the Haitian elite, up the hill from the harbor — out of range of cannon fire.

Even French diplomats recognized their threats had prompted the Haitian government to pour money into its military, rather than send it to France.

“The fear of France, which naturally wants to be paid, does not allow it to reduce its military state,” reads a 1832 letter by one French diplomat.

In late 1837, two French envoys arrived in Port-au-Prince with orders to negotiate a new treaty and get the payments flowing again. The so-called independence debt was reduced to 90 million francs, and in 1838, another warship returned to France with Haiti’s second payment, which swallowed much of Haiti’s revenues once again.

The military sucked up another large chunk, according to the French abolitionist writer and politician Victor Schœlcher. After that, there was very little left for hospitals, public works and other aspects of public welfare. Education had been assigned a mere 15,816 gourdes — less than 1 percent of the budget.

### **‘And Then Sells Himself’**

From the very beginning, French officials knew how disastrous the payments would be for Haiti. But they kept insisting on getting paid, and for decades — with some exceptions, notably during periods of political upheaval — Haiti came up with the money.

The Times tracked each payment Haiti made over the course of 64 years, drawing from thousands of pages of archival records in France and Haiti, along with dozens of articles and books from the 19th and early 20th centuries, including by the Haitian finance minister Frédéric Marcelin.

In some years, Haiti’s payments to France soaked up more than 40 percent of the government’s total revenues.

“They don’t know which way to turn,” a French captain wrote to the Baron of Mackau in 1826 after collecting a shipment of gold from Haiti.

“After trying domestic loans, patriotic subscriptions, forced donations, sales of public property, they have finally settled on the worst of all options,” the captain wrote: 10 years of exorbitant taxes that were “so out of all proportion to the achievable resources of the country, that when each one sells all that he possesses, and then sells himself, not even half of the sums demanded will be collected.”

Yet by 1874, Haiti had paid down all but 12 million francs of its double debt to France, in large part through coffee taxes. To finish off the rest — and finally invest in the country’s development by building bridges, railroads, lighthouses — the government took out two more hefty loans from French bankers.

The borrowing ended up being a “shameless waste,” the president of Haiti’s national assembly said after a parliamentary investigation.

In an 1875 loan, the French bankers and investors took a 40 percent cut off the top. Most of the rest went to paying other debts, while the remainder lined the pockets of corrupt Haitian officials who, historians say, enriched themselves at the expense of their country's future.

Instead of escaping *mizè*, Haitians slid deeper into it.

While the world's great powers, and even some smaller countries like Costa Rica, were investing in huge public health projects to fight disease and improve their citizens' quality of life, Haiti had scraps for things like hospitals and water pipes. In 1877, when the public works department was officially created, it had two architects and six engineers for the entire country.

One British diplomat, Spencer St. John, described Port-au-Prince at this time as perhaps "the most foul smelling, dirty and consequently fever-stricken city in the world," with human waste collecting in fetid pools on the streets that "in other countries is carried off by the sewers."

[The bank that benefited most from the 1875 loan was Crédit Industriel et Commercial](#), the French institution that helped finance the Eiffel Tower. And soon after its first lucrative foray into Haiti, Crédit Industriel shaped the country yet again, helping to establish the National Bank of Haiti.

Nearly the only thing Haitian about it was the name.

Headquartered in Paris, controlled by French businessmen and aristocrats, the bank took over Haiti's treasury operations, charged a commission any time the Haitian government so much as deposited money or paid a bill, and delivered the profits to its shareholders in France. In 1894, a banner year, its French investors earned more than the Haitian government's proposed agriculture budget for the entire country.

After 1915, when [the Americans replaced the French as the dominant force in Haiti](#), they did more than just control the country's national bank: They installed a puppet government, dissolved parliament at gunpoint, entrenched segregation, forced Haitians to build roads for no pay, killed protesters and rewrote the nation's Constitution, enabling foreigners to own property for the first time since independence.

The military occupation lasted 19 years, and was justified as vital to securing American interests in the region and taming Haiti's chaos. The United States, where lawmakers once feared the contagion effect of Haitian independence, now depicted the invasion as a civilizing mission, necessary because, as Secretary of State Robert Lansing wrote in 1918, "the African race are devoid of any capacity for political organization."

There was another hand behind the occupation, as well: Wall Street, in particular [the National City Bank of New York, the predecessor of Citigroup](#). By 1922, its affiliate had bought all the shares in Haiti's national bank and, with a guarantee from the American government that it would be repaid, won the chance to lend still more money to Haiti. The bank ended up controlling nearly all of Haiti's foreign debt — and then followed a well-established pattern.

It did little to develop Haiti, while sucking up a quarter of the country's revenues over the next decade, according to annual fiscal reports reviewed by The Times.

When investigators with the newly formed United Nations visited Haiti after the Americans gave up financial control in 1947, they found a country in the same desperate straits as always.

From 1825 to 1957, the analysis by The Times found, international debt drained an average of 19 percent of the country's annual revenue, and in some years ate up more than 40 percent.

"It's a really massive number by modern standards," said Ugo Panizza, an Italian economist who has examined the double debt.

Moreover, loans are often taken on by countries to invest in their welfare and development. That was rarely the case in Haiti. The double debt was imposed by an outside power that provided no goods or services in return, sapping the new nation's wealth from the beginning.

"The first economic impact of this drain was the absence of funds to invest in education, health and infrastructure," said Thomas Piketty, a French economist who has also studied the double debt. "But even more decisively, in the long term, this drain has totally disrupted the process of state building."

Not everyone agrees. In some periods, the biggest line item in the Haitian state's budget — even bigger than its debt payments — was the military.

Some experts described the expense as understandable, given the Haitian fear of a French invasion and the American occupation decades later. But others see Haiti's heavy military spending as a reflection of a predatory government more interested in reaping financial rewards and staying in power than helping its people.

"There was always the alternative: Spend less on the military, spend more on development," said Mats Lundahl, a Swedish economist who has published several books on Haiti. "This was a deliberate choice." From 1843 to 1915, Haiti had 22 governments, he pointed out. Seventeen were deposed in revolutions or coups.

The double debt imposed by France clearly had an impact, Mr. Lundahl said, but "I don't think it's the main reason for Haitian underdevelopment." Haiti's leaders, he said, "did a pretty good job themselves."

### **'President for Life'**

A bookish, middle-aged doctor was elected president in 1957.

François Duvalier, who had run a clinic training doctors to treat a disfiguring disease called yaws, promised to free the government from the grip of the country's elite and represent the other Haiti: the poor with no paved roads, no running water and no education. He called them "the great unacknowledged" and promised to bring them out of their *mizè*.

The country's prospects looked good. For the first time in more than 130 years, Haiti was unburdened by crippling international debt. And after frost had damaged Brazil's coffee crop, the price of the commodity soared, offering Haiti's government a windfall that it began to spend on irrigation canals and the country's first big hydroelectric dam.

"The present moment offers Haiti an exceptional opportunity," the World Bank said in 1954, adding that "this opportunity has to be seized now."

Instead, Duvalier drove his country into despair.

The 28-year dictatorship he shared with his son Jean-Claude terrorized the nation. The Tontons Macoutes, a militia Duvalier created, attacked every perceived threat, including students and journalists. Hundreds were thrown into a network of prisons Human Rights Watch called the "triangle of death" and never heard from again. Others were shot on the street, their bodies left in heaps. In 1964, Duvalier declared himself "president for life."

Professionals fled the country, taking their expertise. By 1970, more Haitian doctors were practicing in Montreal than in Haiti, one journalist, James Ferguson, estimated.

Duvalier perfected the corruption of past leaders, dipping into the state tobacco monopoly and skimming the pay of Haitian workers sent to Dominican sugar mills. His government outright extorted citizens, particularly through its "National Renovation Movement," demanding that they donate to the construction of what jurists called a "purely fictitious" city named "Duvalierville."

Initially, the Duvalier government found an ally in the Cold War struggle unfolding across the hemisphere: the United States.

After a Haitian diplomat voted in favor of ejecting Cuba from the Organization of American States, the American government agreed to fund a large airport — named the François Duvalier International Airport — in Port-au-Prince. The arrangement was widely cast by journalists as a tit-for-tat agreement, but the United States Agency for International Development soon closed its freshly built headquarters in Port-au-Prince because of corruption in the Duvalier government.

After a second heart attack, Duvalier, nicknamed “Papa Doc,” had the country’s Constitution changed so that his young son, just 19, could replace him. Known as “Baby Doc,” Jean-Claude Duvalier continued his father’s reign of terror and graft. By the time protests forced the dictator and his family to be spirited away on an American plane to France, he and his relatives had stolen hundreds of millions of dollars, having treated the state like a “royal fiefdom,” a Haitian government investigation found.

Over that time, the country’s misery deepened. Fewer than one in four adults could read, according to a 1985 World Bank report. From a quarter to half of Haitian children suffered severe malnutrition. Many were in the countryside, where coffee farmers earned even less than they had before the Duvalier regime.

After Jean-Claude Duvalier fled the country, the coffee tax was removed for the first time in more than a century. But it was too little, too late.

Farmers had been growing coffee more or less the same way since the days after the revolution, in very small garden plots where the trees seeded themselves naturally, mixed with banana and orange trees, as well as vegetables. There had never been a serious push by the government to develop the industry with new technology, fertilizers or new varieties of coffee.

The bountiful harvests that continued for generations and paid the nation’s debts were “like magic,” said Jobert Angrand, the former head of the National Coffee Institute of Haiti and a recent minister of agriculture.

By the 1980s, the magic had worn off. Poor farmers began to cut down their coffee trees and plant quicker-growing cash crops instead, leading to erosion. In Dondon, farmers who once couldn’t see the Citadelle from their fields because of the thick foliage above them suddenly had a clear view. Coffee exports began to plummet.

“This is the problem in Haiti,” said Mr. Angrand. “There is no investment in the countryside.”

#### **‘All the Better’**

The Americans arrived at the gates of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s house before dawn on Feb. 29, 2004. Flanked by security officers, a U.S. diplomat climbed the mansion’s steps to see the president — and ask for his resignation letter before whisking him into exile.

Mr. Aristide, a former Catholic priest who had railed against the dictatorship from his pulpit in the slums, and the first lady, Mildred Aristide, stepped into a diplomatic car to the airport and boarded an American plane from the tarmac.

Their destination was unknown even then. They were simply being removed from the country.

As the plane circled in the air, its blinds down, French officials frantically called the leaders of African countries, searching for someone willing to host Haiti’s soon-to-be former president, according to Mr. Burkard, the French ambassador to Haiti at the time. Finally, after three rejections, President François Bozizé of the Central African Republic agreed.

After Mr. Aristide landed in Bangui — a capital thousands of miles from his own, on a different continent — he made reference to Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian revolutionary leader. He had been abducted by

French soldiers in 1802 after signing a peace agreement, carted off to France and thrown in prison without a trial in the frozen Jura Mountains, where he died a year later.

Louverture's famous line is a standard of Haitian history books: "In overthrowing me, you have done no more than cut down the trunk of the tree of Black liberty in Saint-Domingue. It will spring back from the roots, for they are numerous and deep."

Mr. Aristide changed it slightly. "In overthrowing me they have uprooted the trunk of the tree of peace," he said, "but it will grow back because the roots are Louverturian."

Later, he was more pointed: He told American news outlets by phone that he'd been kidnapped.

Haiti's two former colonizers described their joint action as both a rapprochement after their friction over the Iraq War and a humanitarian mission to avoid a looming civil war in Haiti. Haitian rebel soldiers were in the north, threatening to soon take the capital and Mr. Aristide. Pro-Aristide and anti-Aristide protesters had clashed violently in the streets. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell called Mr. Aristide's claim of being kidnapped "absurd."

But Mr. Burkard, the French ambassador, told The Times in a recent interview that France and the United States had effectively orchestrated "a coup" against Mr. Aristide by forcing him into exile.

And while Mr. Aristide's demand for financial restitution from France was not the principal reason for his removal, Mr. Burkard said, his ouster had an added benefit: It ended Mr. Aristide's noisy campaign, which had landed with the force of a grenade, threatening to blow up relations with all former colonies.

That made his removal "all the better," said Mr. Burkard.

Mr. Aristide had been ousted before, in a military coup in 1991, less than a year after winning the first democratic election since the dictatorship. But he was re-elected nine years later and launched his restitution campaign in 2003, on the 200th anniversary of Toussaint Louverture's death.

With the money Haiti shipped to France for the so-called independence debt back in hand, he said, his country could invest in all the things it had never been able to afford, including schools, hospitals, roads, tractors and water for peasants.

Tallying Haiti's losses, he presented a bill: \$21,685,135,571.48.

The figure, both for its size and its precision, was mocked by French diplomats and denounced by some Haitian intellectuals as an attempt by Mr. Aristide to distract from the country's woes and maintain his grip on power. But, as the estimates vetted by economists and historians consulted by The Times show, his calculations may have been close to the mark — and possibly even modest.

The Aristide government had hired international lawyers to assemble arguments and a researcher to dig through French archives. On the nation's 200th Independence Day, Mr. Aristide celebrated before huge crowds on the lawn of the national palace, promising to replace a 21-gun salute with 21 things he would do once the restitution was paid — a retort to the cannons fired by the Baron of Mackau's fleet centuries ago.

"Why after 200 years, is Haiti this impoverished?" Mr. Aristide asked during a rare interview with The Times at his home office in the suburbs of Port-au-Prince, a large gold-painted bust of Toussaint Louverture on a table behind him.

"We were condemned to live in poverty — not just poverty, but misery," he said. "An abject misery tied to 1825."



Since his departure, none of his successors have pressed the issue. In 2003, the French government dismissed his claim of restitution. Twelve years later, Mr. Hollande acknowledged that France did indeed owe Haiti a debt — before his staff quickly said it was not a monetary one.

Still, Mr. Aristide argued that he and others had “seeded the field,” noting that while the Haitian revolution started in 1791, it took years before enslaved people became free, and years more until they claimed independence.

“It’s not finished,” he said.

### **‘Resign yourself to *mizè*’**

The tinny scrapes of metal shovels on concrete echo outside the Vincent Ogé coffee cooperative. Using methods that haven’t changed for generations, workers scoop up the coffee beans drying in the sun and toss them in wheelbarrows.

As dusk nears, the farmers begin to arrive, carrying the season’s first crop directly from their gardens in buckets and in thick plastic sacks.

“All the benefits of coffee were never returned to the peasants,” says François Dubois, the local coffee cooperative’s founder.

“Even if the money came back, it wouldn’t reach us,” he says. “It would go into the pockets of the *gwo moun* — the big shots,” he adds, “like Duvalier, who put it all in Swiss banks.”

Mr. Dubois greets the arriving farmers from a straw chair in the dim processing room. Beside him, a barefoot worker dips each farmer’s load into a bucket of water to remove any cherries that have been hollowed out by pests. Then, the cherries’ flesh is removed, and the remaining seeds — known widely as beans — go to a cistern to ferment. The process hasn’t changed all that much since the coffee boom of Saint-Domingue.

Very few of the coffee farmers in Dondon had heard of the so-called independence debt, despite the pivotal roles their ancestors played in paying it. The handful who had a notion said they were too full of other worries to ponder what it meant for the nation’s evolution. They were busy battling *mizè*.

Hunger. Sickness. Unpaid school fees. The crippling cost of a father’s funeral. One man steps out of the cooperative, runs his hands over his face, and says forlornly that he can’t keep anything in his head since his grandchild died of fever.

“You have to resign yourself to *mizè*,” said Rose Melanie Lindor, a 70-year-old coffee farmer on the other side of town. Five of her 10 children died.

By the time Etienne Roberson stepped into the cooperative, the sun had painted the trees with honey. He almost made it through high school before his family stopped being able to pay the fee, and knew more than most about the so-called independence debt.

“It was bad for the country,” he said. “When we were paying it, that’s when the country became poor.” Across the dirt road, Ms. Present stopped picking cherries from her coffee trees earlier that day, taking a rare moment to contemplate her nation’s past and her ancestors’ parts in shaping it.

“If we have our liberty now because of coffee,” she said finally, “I’m proud of that.”

Then, she got back to work.

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HEADLINE	05/22 Russian brigade terrorized Bucha
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/europe/ukraine-bucha-war-crimes-russia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/europe/ukraine-bucha-war-crimes-russia.html</a>

BUCHA, Ukraine — When the soldiers of Russia's 64th Motorized Rifle Brigade arrived in Bucha in mid-March, they brought a new level of death and terror to the city.

Over the next 18 days, in just one corner of this Kyiv suburb where the brigade took control, 12 people were killed, including all of the inhabitants of six houses where the soldiers set up camp.

Olha Havryliuk's son and son-in-law, along with a stranger, were shot in the head in the yard of their house. The Russian soldiers smashed the Havryliuks's fence, parked their armored vehicle in the garden, and moved into the house. They cooked in the neighbor's garden, killing and plucking chickens and roasting them on a barbecue while the men lay dead yards away across the alley.

By the time the troops pulled out at the end of March, two brothers, Yuriy and Viktor Pavlenko, who lived at the end of the street, lay dead in a ditch by the railway line. Volodymyr Cherednychenko was found dead in a neighbor's cellar. Another man, caught by the Russian soldiers as he ran along the train track and taken into a cellar of a house at the end of the street, was also found shot dead.

The story of Bucha and its horrors has unfolded in chapters as new revelations of Russian atrocities emerge, fueling outrage among Ukrainians and across much of the world. But prosecutors and military intelligence officials were investigating early on, collecting evidence to try to identify the perpetrators responsible for the mass killings, torture and rapes in the once tranquil suburb.

Working with war crimes and forensic experts from around the world, Ukrainian investigators have reached some preliminary conclusions, focusing in particular on the 64th Brigade. They have already identified 10 soldiers from the unit and accused them of war crimes.

Ukrainian officials say that the brigade was formed after Russia struggled in a 2008 war with Georgia, and that it was awarded an honorary title by President Vladimir V. Putin last month for its performance in Ukraine.

Yet the brigade took little part in any fighting, coming in after other units had seized control of Bucha and then tasked with "holding" it. The troops established checkpoints throughout the town, parking their armored vehicles in people's yards and taking over their homes.

"They imprisoned our people," said Ruslan Kravchenko, the chief prosecutor for the Bucha district, describing the actions of the accused soldiers. "They tied their hands and legs and taped their eyes. They beat them with fists and feet, and with gun butts in the chest, and imitated executions."

The name of the 64th Brigade and a list of 1,600 of its soldiers were found among computer files left behind in the Russian military headquarters in Bucha, providing investigators with an immense resource as they began their investigation. Dmytro Replianchuk at Slidstvo.info, a Ukrainian investigative news agency, soon found the social media profiles of dozens of the names, including officers.

Three victims who survived beatings and torture have been able to identify the perpetrators from the photographs, Mr. Kravchenko said.

One of the victims was Yuriy, 50, a factory worker, who lives near one of the most notorious Russian bases, at 144 Yablunska Street. On March 13, a unit of the 64th Brigade came to search his house. He said that he had identified the soldiers when shown photographs by prosecutors. The soldiers were rough and uncouth, he said. "You could see they were from the Taiga," he said, referring to the Siberian forest. "They just talk to bears."

Yuriy managed to avoid suspicion, but on March 19, the soldiers returned and detained his neighbor Oleksiy. Like several others interviewed for this article, the men asked to be identified by only their first names for their security.

Oleksiy declined to be interviewed but confirmed that he had been detained twice by the Russian unit, interrogated in a basement for several hours and put through a mock execution when the soldiers fired a gun behind him. Still shaken, he said, "I just want to try to forget it all."

### **Created to 'Scare the Population'**

Based in Russia's far east, near the border with China, the 64th Brigade belongs to the Eastern Military District, long seen as the part of the Russian Army with the lowest levels of training and equipment.

The brigade has ethnic Russian commanders but consists largely of soldiers drawn from minority ethnic groups and disadvantaged communities, according to Col. Mykola Krasny, the head of public affairs of Ukrainian military intelligence.

In radio conversations that were intercepted by Ukrainian forces, some of the Russians expressed surprise that village roads in outlying areas of Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, were paved with asphalt, he said.

"We see it as a deliberate policy to draft soldiers from depressed regions of Russia," Colonel Krasny said.

Not a lot is known about the brigade, but Colonel Krasny claimed that it was notable for its lack of morality, for beatings of soldiers and for thieving. Drawn from a regiment that had served in Chechnya, the brigade was established on Jan. 1, 2009, shortly after Russia's war in Georgia, Colonel Krasny said. The goal was clear, he added: to build up a fearsome army unit that could instill control.

"The consequences of these politics was what happened in Bucha," he said. "Having no discipline, and these aggressive habits, it looks like it was created to scare the population."

He claimed that the Russian soldiers' disadvantaged backgrounds, and the fact that they could act with impunity, prompted them "to do unspeakable things."

It was not only the enemy who suffered their brutality. The Russian Army has long had a reputation for hazing its own soldiers, and on a cellphone left behind in Bucha by a member of the 64th, investigators found recent evidence of the practice: a video in which an officer is talking to a subordinate and then suddenly punches him in the side of the head while other soldiers stand around talking.

The Russian government did not respond to a request for comment on the accusations against the 64th Brigade but has repeatedly claimed that allegations of its forces having committed atrocities in Bucha and elsewhere are false.

Western analysts who have studied the Russian Army said that the behavior of troops in Bucha was not a surprise.

"It is consistent with the way they consider responding," said Nick Reynolds, a researcher of land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute, a military research organization in London. "Reprisals are part and parcel of how the Russian military does business."

### **The 'Bad Guys' Will Come**

Killings occurred in Bucha from the first days that Russian troops appeared. The first units were airborne assault troops, paratroopers and special forces who fired on cars and civilians in the streets and detained men suspected of being in the Ukrainian Army or territorial defense.

The extent of the killings, and the seeming lack of hesitation among Russian soldiers to carry them out, has led Ukrainian officials to surmise that they were acting under orders.

"They couldn't not know," Bucha's prosecutor, Mr. Kravchenko, said of senior military commanders. "I think the terror was planned."

Many of the documented killings occurred on Yablunska Street, where bodies lay for weeks, visible on satellite images. But not far away, on a corner of Ivana Franka Street, a particular form of hell played out after March 12.

Residents had already been warned that things would get worse. A pensioner, Mykola, 67, said that the Russian troops who first came to the neighborhood had advised him to leave while he could. ““After us, such bad guys will come,”” the commander told him, he recalled. “I think they had radio contact and they knew who was coming, and they had their own opinion of them.”

Mykola left Bucha before the 64th Brigade arrived.

The spring flowers are pushing up everywhere in Bucha, fruit trees are in blossom, and city workers have swept the streets and filled in some of the bomb craters. But at the end of Ivana Franka Street, amid smashed cars and destroyed homes, there is an eerie desolation.

“From this house to the end, no one is left alive,” said Ms. Havryliuk, 65. “Eleven people were killed here. Only we stayed alive.”

Her son and son-in-law had stayed behind to look after the house and the dogs, and were killed on March 12 or 13, when the 64th Brigade first arrived, she said. The death certificates said that they had been shot in the head.

What happened over the next two weeks is hard to fathom. The few residents who stayed were confined to their homes and only occasionally dared to go out to fetch water from a well. Some of them saw people being detained by the Russians.

Nadezhda Cherednychenko, 50, pleaded with the soldiers to let her son go. He was being held in the yard of a house and his arm had been injured when she last saw him. She found him dead in the cellar of the same house three weeks later, after the Russians withdrew.

“They should be punished,” she said of his captors. “They brought so much pain to people. Mothers without children, fathers, children without parents. It’s something you cannot forgive.”

Neighbors who lived next door to the Havryliuks just disappeared. Volodymyr and Tetiana Shypilo, a teacher, and their son Andriy, 39, lived in one part of the house, and Oleh Yarmolenko, 47, lived alone in the other side. “They were all our relatives,” Ms. Havryliuk said.

Down a side alley lived Lidiya Sydorenko, 62, and her husband Serhiy, 65. Their daughter, Tetiana Naumova, said that she spoke to them by telephone midmorning on March 22.

“Mother was crying the whole time,” Ms. Naumova said. “She was usually an optimist, but I think she had a bad feeling.”

Minutes later, Russian soldiers came in and demanded to search their garage. They told a neighbor to leave, shooting at the ground by her feet.

“By lunchtime they had killed them,” Ms. Naumova said.

She returned to the house with her husband, Vitaliy, and her son Anton last month after the Russian troops withdrew from Kyiv. Her parents were nowhere to be found, but they found ominous traces — her father’s hat with bullet holes in it, three pools of blood and a piece of her mother’s scalp and hair.

There was also no sign of the Shypilos or of Mr. Yarmolenko, except trails of blood where bodies had been dragged along the floor of their house.

Eventually, French forensic investigators solved the mystery.

They examined six charred bodies found in an empty lot up the street and confirmed that they were the missing civilians: the Sydorenkos, the three Shypilos and Mr. Yarmolenko. Several bore bullet wounds but three of them had had limbs severed, including Ms. Naumova's mother, the investigators told the families.

Her father had multiple gunshot wounds to the head and chest, her mother had had an arm and a leg cut off, she said.

"They tortured them," Ms. Havryliuk said, "and burned them to cover their tracks."

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HEADLINE	05/20 CDC: 50 and older should get 2 <sup>nd</sup> booster
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/20/world/covid-19-deaths-vaccines-cases?name=stylin-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#cdc-second-booster">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/20/world/covid-19-deaths-vaccines-cases?name=stylin-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#cdc-second-booster</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — In a sign of growing concern among federal health officials about the spread of new coronavirus infections, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now saying that all people 50 or older should get a second booster shot if at least four months have passed since their first booster dose.</p> <p>Previously, <a href="#">the agency said those 50 and older had the option of the additional shot</a>, but only <a href="#">encouraged people over 65 or with underlying medical conditions to get it</a>. The new guidance, <a href="#">issued in a statement on the C.D.C.'s website on Thursday</a>, also extends to anyone <a href="#">12 and older with certain immune deficiencies</a>.</p> <p>The C.D.C. said it was changing its advice because of a steady rise in infections over the past month, coupled with "a steep and substantial increase in hospitalizations for older Americans." New confirmed cases surpassed an average of 100,000 a day again this week, <a href="#">according to a New York Times database</a> — <a href="#">a number considered an undercount</a>. And nationally, hospitalizations of people with Covid-19 were averaging more than 23,800 a day as of Thursday, 31 percent more than two weeks ago.</p> <p>Most Americans 50 or older received their last dose of Covid vaccine more than six months ago. That has left "many who are vulnerable without the protection they may need to prevent severe disease, hospitalization and death," the C.D.C. said.</p> <p>In another warning of growing Covid risks, Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, <a href="#">the agency's director, said Friday</a> that more than 45 percent of Americans now live in areas where transmission rates are high enough that <a href="#">they should at least consider wearing a mask in indoor public settings</a>.</p> <p>That was a substantial jump from <a href="#">the data she cited just two days earlier at a White House briefing</a>. She said then that about one-third of Americans lived in counties with medium to high levels of virus transmission. That itself was a big increase; only about one-fourth of the population fell into risk zones the previous week, she said.</p> <p>In a message posted Friday on Twitter, Dr. Walensky said those in high-risk areas — largely in the Northeast — should wear masks indoors in public. Those in medium-risk areas, which include counties in nearly every state, should consider masks based on their assessment of their personal risks, she said.</p> <p>Hospital admissions of patients with Covid are a major factor in the C.D.C.'s assessments of a community's risk. But other experts cautioned that hospitalization data could be misleading because patients might have been admitted for unrelated illnesses, and merely tested positive during routine Covid checks.</p>

“We have 11 people in our hospital right now with Covid,” said Dr. Monica Gandhi, an infectious disease doctor at San Francisco General Hospital. “Three of them were hospitalized for Covid and the other eight have Covid in their noses and are there for other reasons.”

She said that in Massachusetts, a state with a high rate of vaccination, officials estimate that as many as 70 percent of hospital patients who test positive for the virus were admitted primarily for unrelated illnesses. However, [coronavirus infections can also exacerbate underlying medical conditions](#), which many Americans have.

The death rate from Covid, although a lagging indicator, may be a more reliable gauge of the degree of the disease’s impact, because physicians must note the cause of death on the death certificate, according to Dr. Gandhi and other experts.

Recently, deaths have remained low. About 275 deaths have been recorded each day on a seven-day average, Dr. Walensky said on Thursday. The number of new deaths has actually dipped slightly in recent weeks. According to the Times database, the overall toll of U.S. deaths [surpassed one million on Thursday](#), the [highest confirmed total of any nation](#).

Those age 50 or older have been eligible for a second booster since late March, but federal health officials have said too few people are taking advantage of it. Only one-fourth of those 65 and older who have gotten one booster dose, for instance, have gotten a second, [the C.D.C.’s data show](#).

Dr. Walensky also said this week that the C.D.C. and the Food and Drug Administration were now discussing whether to broaden eligibility to those younger than 50.

This week, the agencies [cleared a booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#) for 5- to 11-year-olds, expanding eligibility for a first booster dose to a younger age group. Among other factors cited in [its decision memo](#), the F.D.A. cited “the continued relaxation” of preventive measures, including mask mandates, social distancing and isolation of infected individuals.

The agency also noted the risk of long Covid, which it said “can cause significant morbidity after initially mild infection.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Judge blocks lifting health order Title 42</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/20/world/covid-19-deaths-vaccines-cases?name=stylin-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#title-42-border-migrants-court">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/20/world/covid-19-deaths-vaccines-cases?name=stylin-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#title-42-border-migrants-court</a>
GIST	<p>A federal judge on Friday blocked the Biden administration from lifting a pandemic-related health order whose scheduled expiration on Monday would have thrown open the doors of the United States to asylum seekers at the border for the first time in more than two years.</p> <p>The ruling means further delays for thousands of people waiting for a chance to seek refuge in the United States, but it averts a potential crisis on the border by giving the administration more time to roll out its plan to handle the large numbers that are expected. Department of Homeland Security officials have said they were preparing for as many as 18,000 migrants a day, compared with 8,000 currently, if the order were lifted.</p> <p>“The Biden administration is probably breathing a sigh of relief because they weren’t ready for the rule to be lifted,” said Wayne Cornelius, director emeritus of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California, San Diego.</p> <p>The sweeping public health measure, known as Title 42, was put into place in March 2020 to control the transmission of the coronavirus across the border. Under its authority, thousands of migrants arriving at</p>

land borders have been swiftly expelled, without an opportunity for those fleeing danger and persecution to request humanitarian protection in the United States.

But since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in April that it would suspend the order, citing the availability of effective vaccines to combat the coronavirus, concern has shifted to the potential for overcrowding and turmoil at the border should Title 42 expulsions no longer be enforced.

Judge Robert R. Summerhays of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana issued a nationwide preliminary injunction directing the administration to keep the rule in place for now, effectively postponing what would almost certainly be tens of thousands of new migrant admissions.

Even with the public health order in place, U.S. Border Patrol agents are encountering near-record numbers of people who either crossed on their own or were allowed to enter under various Title 42 exemptions. A total of 234,088 migrants crossed the southern border in April.

Twenty-four states, led by Arizona, Louisiana and Missouri, sued on April 3, two days after the C.D.C. announcement lifting the public health order, arguing that Title 42's continued enforcement was needed to avert the threat of a "wave of illegal migration and drug trafficking" and that returning to normal enforcement practices would cause irreparable harm.

In a 47-page decision, Judge Summerhays, an appointee of President Donald J. Trump, whose administration initially adopted the public health order, found that lifting the order would cause irreparable harm by increasing the health care and education costs that the states would have to bear as a result of the arrival of a large number of new migrants. And the judge ruled that the states were likely to succeed in their argument that the C.D.C. had not followed proper rule-making procedures under federal law.

"The court concludes that the public interest would be served by a preliminary injunction preventing the termination of the C.D.C.'s Title 42 orders," the judge wrote.

Republican state leaders praised the decision. "The federal court stepped in to protect our nation when the Biden administration failed to do so," Gov. Doug Ducey of Arizona said in a statement on Twitter.

But some legal analysts said the ruling left the federal government unable to comply with its legal obligations under both U.S. and international law to offer asylum to migrants who meet the standards under the law.

The injunction "will continue to imperil lives and block access to the asylum system," said Monika Y. Langarica, a staff attorney at the Center for Immigration Law and Policy at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The Justice Department said it would appeal the ruling, and the Biden administration said it would continue to enforce the expulsions pending the outcome. "The authority to set public health policy nationally should rest with the Centers for Disease Control, not with a single District Court," Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary, said in a statement.

Government lawyers had argued in court that the C.D.C. had determined that Title 42 authority was no longer warranted, and that forcing the government to enforce the policy amounted to an intrusion on the agency's handling of the pandemic.

But the court ruled that the order had become about more than public health during the pandemic. "Title 42 is certainly a public health measure" the judge wrote. "But, as defendants acknowledge, it protects public health by regulating immigration."

A team of lawyers had sought to persuade the judge to limit his injunction only to those states asking for it, a move that would have allowed Title 42 to be lifted in states such as California and New Mexico, and



some along the northern border with Canada. But the judge rejected that request this month, and his ruling applies to the entire country.

There have been about two million expulsions since March 2020 under the order, affecting many people who would have otherwise been admitted to the United States for an assessment of their asylum claims or placed into deportation proceedings. Those processes often take months or years.

The public health order initially was used to swiftly turn back migrants from Mexico and Central America by busing them back to Mexico. But under the Biden administration, large numbers of migrants from Haiti and other countries have also been swiftly deported, typically on planes, without hearings.

As the pandemic subsided, human rights advocates and progressive lawmakers raised intensifying concerns that Title 42 was being used as a tool to curb immigration, in violation of international law, rather than to stop the spread of Covid-19.

The announcement on April 1 by the C.D.C. that the measure was no longer warranted drew swift, loud rebukes from Republicans who predicted that the United States would be overwhelmed with border crossers, including several thousand already waiting in Mexico and thousands more likely to move north from their home countries.

Scenes of chaos at the border, even if short-lived, could be damaging for Democrats heading into a hotly contested midterm election, even though many of them, including the Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer of New York, pushed for lifting Title 42 earlier this year. Republicans have made border security a core campaign issue, and have demanded a vote on a Senate amendment that would ensure the public health order remains in place before voting on a package that allocates funds toward vaccines, therapeutics and other coronavirus treatment. Some Senate Democrats have also expressed concerns about the administration's plans to lift the order, making the amendment likely to pass.

The Justice Department could seek an emergency stay of Judge Summerhays's injunction from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which would almost certainly turn it down, and then the case could land in the Supreme Court. Alternatively, the administration could wait until Congress votes on the amendment, and if it passes, ask the judge to set aside the case as irrelevant.

In April, the Department of Homeland Security said that it was not possible to predict the number of migrants who would show up at the border after Title 42 expires, and that it could vary widely from one section of the border to another.

Homeland Security officials have said they were preparing for as many as 18,000 migrants a day, while most predictions hover around 12,000.

The Biden administration unveiled a plan in April to handle the influx by increasing border personnel, streamlining migrant processing to prevent overcrowding and imposing strict penalties on border crossers who cannot establish a legal basis to remain in the United States.

The plan, a 20-page memo, also targets migrant smugglers for criminal prosecution, outlines a new collaboration with nonprofits that shelter migrants after they are released from immigration custody and coordinates more widely with countries through which migrants pass en route to the United States

Alejandro N. Mayorkas, the homeland security secretary, has defended the strategy while conceding that the border could come under more strain and asserting that the broken immigration system requires an overhaul, which Congress has failed to deliver for decades.

Immigration has bedeviled Mr. Biden since he entered office promising to undo the harsh border policies of his predecessor. But the prospect of an abrupt end to Title 42, along with a large wave of border crossings that has occurred despite the public health order, turned the issue into an urgent matter of national debate. Polls have shown that more than half of Americans oppose lifting it.

“The court’s decision to block the C.D.C. from ending Title 42 will permit the Biden administration to shore up its post-Title 42 plan and seek additional resources from Congress if necessary,” said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, senior policy counsel at the American Immigration Council, a pro-immigration group.

“But as the last two years of Title 42 have shown us,” he said, “a failed policy isn’t going to get any better with time, and the longer Title 42 is kept in place the harder it will be for any administration to manage the border.”

In the first six months of the fiscal year that started in October, border officials have encountered more than one million migrants at the southern border, about half of whom were removed under the policy.

The public health order has always been applied unevenly, with the government allowing some migrants in under humanitarian exemptions and a variety of other factors that have limited its options.

Along many stretches of the border, for example, Mexican states have refused to accept the return of migrants with young children; along others, states have refused to take back people from far-flung countries, such as Brazil, India and Senegal, compelling the United States to release them inside the country with court hearings for deportation.

While challenging in the short term, lifting Title 42 could result in a decrease in unauthorized crossings in the long term if unauthorized crossers are once again prosecuted for illegal entry instead of being simply expelled, with the possibility of detention and a permanent bar of admission to the country.

The public health order has had the unintended effect of encouraging repeated illegal entries, especially by single adults, because migrants are being quickly processed and returned to Mexico — sometimes within minutes of being intercepted by agents — only to try to cross again. About three out of 10 adults are recidivists, and some of them have tried as many as 10 times.

From April through September 2020, 47 percent of single adults apprehended by agents had been encountered in the previous 12 months, more than double the share between 2014 and March 2020, before Title 42 was put into place, according to an analysis by the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Monkeypox the world’s new Covid-19?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-monkeypox-the-worlds-new-covid-19-scientists-make-judgment-call?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-monkeypox-the-worlds-new-covid-19-scientists-make-judgment-call?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>As if one pandemic weren’t enough, a dangerous new virus is spreading all over the world. Starting around two weeks ago, monkeypox—a pathogen that originated in West and Central Africa and causes flu-like symptoms and a rash—cropped up in places where it’s not usually found.</p> <p>Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom have reported a few dozen cases between them. And now the United States. Authorities in Massachusetts <a href="#">detected</a> the infection Tuesday night, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <a href="#">quickly confirmed it</a>.</p> <p>But don’t panic. The world has contained outbreaks of monkeypox before. And we’re even better prepared for the virus now that we’ve had three years of practice with the <a href="#">novel coronavirus</a>.</p> <p>“I’m not worried about anything resembling an outbreak,” Irwin Redlener, the founding director of Columbia University’s National Center for Disaster Preparedness, told The Daily Beast. He was using the epidemiological definition of outbreak, which is a sudden spread of an unusual disease, but in a small geographical area rather than globally.</p> <p>The handful of monkeypox cases in a handful of countries don’t yet qualify as an outbreak, by many scientists’ standards. Could the virus spread to more people in more countries? Yes. But don’t expect it to</p>

be anything like [the spread of COVID](#). “SARS-CoV is much more contagious than other infections,” Stephanie James, the head of a viral testing lab at Regis University in Colorado, told The Daily Beast.

Slower spread means authorities have more time to confirm cases, isolate the infected people and trace their recent contact with others. There isn’t a monkeypox-specific [vaccine](#), but the virus is similar to smallpox, so smallpox vaccines should be reasonably effective—and a useful tool for blocking the pox’s transmission once contact-tracers have identified the people who are at risk.

[That’s what happened in 2003](#), the last time monkeypox got a significant toehold in the United States—that time via pet rodents shipped to Texas from Ghana in West Africa. Forty-seven people fell sick, but a rapid response by state and federal health officials—and a few doses of smallpox vaccine—prevented anyone dying and quickly, albeit temporarily, eliminated the virus in the U.S.

Monkeypox, which first made the leap from monkeys or rodents to people in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Central Africa in 1970, flares up here and there from time to time—usually in Africa. But it rarely infects more than a couple of thousand people a year—and killed just 33 people during its most prolonged outbreak in the DRC between 1981 and 1986.

There are good reasons why monkeypox isn’t nearly as contagious as COVID. Where COVID spreads via very fine droplets of spit—the kind that all of us spew for yards in all directions every time we breathe, talk, laugh or cough—monkeypox prefers bigger droplets that don’t travel very far. It can spread via direct contact between the pathogen and an open wound, too, but that transmission pathway is even less likely than those big, fast-falling droplets.

The key to containing monkeypox is identifying it quickly so the isolation, contact-tracing and treatment can begin before the virus spreads too far. We were pretty good at that a generation ago. We’re even better at it now, thanks in no small part to COVID. “Most of the world is much better prepared for monkeypox than we were two and a half years ago,” Paul Anantharajah Tambyah, president of the Asia Pacific Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infection in Singapore, told The Daily Beast.

Testing is more sophisticated—not just for SARS-CoV-2 infections, but for a whole host of viral diseases. “I would like to think that we have learned how to conduct mass testing more efficiently,” James said. “PCR tests are actually easy as long as we have the correct reagents. We can also test for multiple viruses at the same time.”

We’re better at contact-tracing, too. Investigating people’s movements and relationships in order to map out who they’ve come in close contact with, and when, was a niche practice three years ago. Today many tens of thousands of health workers all over the world have experience with contact-tracing.

The general public is more alert, too. Sure, COVID-related restrictions on schools, business and travel irritate a lot of people. No one loves wearing a mask. Small but stubborn minorities in some countries even refuse to take the free, safe and effective vaccines that offer strong protection against the worst outcomes from a COVID infection.

But that recalcitrance belies the deep awareness most people now have when it comes to viral diseases. People are probably going to notice if a friend, neighbor or family member comes down with the pox—and they’re probably going to take it seriously. “The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the critical importance of staying ahead of infectious disease threats instead of constantly chasing behind them,” Anne Rimoin, a professor of epidemiology at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, told The Daily Beast. “The world is now familiar with the terms ‘case investigation,’ ‘contact tracing’ and ‘genomic sequencing.’”

Perhaps most reassuringly, we’ve already got a vaccine. With COVID, we had to lock down and wait for a year before the first jabs were ready. But since the smallpox vaccine works on monkeypox, there’s no waiting.

	<p>If there's a cause for concern in the recent spate of monkeypox cases, it's that we don't yet know exactly where and how it started. Pinpointing the origins of a viral spread obviously helps to contain it. "We need to figure out what's going on—quickly," James Lawler, an infectious disease expert at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>"That said, in general, we think of monkeypox as much less lethal than smallpox, easier to control in terms of transmission and amenable to vaccines and antivirals," Lawler added.</p> <p>All this is to say, don't worry. Unless a contact-tracer comes knocking (an unlikely proposition) or you notice weird blisters on your neighbor or yourself (even more unlikely), you don't need to do anything differently. "The risk to the general public is very low," Rimoin said.</p> <p>Monkeypox is making one of its periodic comebacks. But this is one virus we're really good at containing.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Marijuana vaping rises sharply among teens</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2022/05/20/teen-marijuana-vaping/1311653072280/">https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2022/05/20/teen-marijuana-vaping/1311653072280/</a>
GIST	<p>A growing number of U.S. teenagers are vaping marijuana -- a habit that in some ways may be more risky than old-fashioned pot smoking, a new study finds.</p> <p>Researchers found that between 2017 and 2019, the percentage of teens who reported any marijuana use in the past month ticked upward slightly -- from 13.9% to 15.4%.</p> <p>What really changed, the study found, was how kids were using the drug. There was a sharp increase in vaping, while traditional marijuana smoking declined.</p> <p>The percentage of kids who said they vaped marijuana "frequently" -- at least once a week -- more than doubled, from 2.1% to 5.4%. Occasional use (one to six times a month) rose to a similar degree.</p> <p>At the same time, the proportion of kids who smoke marijuana declined. In essence, vaping seemed to be replacing smoking, according to lead researcher Katherine Keyes, a professor at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in New York City.</p> <p>She said she could only speculate about the reasons. But the rising popularity of vaping nicotine, along with legalization and changing social norms around marijuana, are likely factors, Keyes said.</p> <p>Those points were echoed by Linda Richter, vice president of prevention research and analysis for the nonprofit Partnership to End Addiction.</p> <p>She said past research offers some "compelling explanations" for the trends seen in this study.</p> <p>"First, the wave of nicotine vaping that spread throughout middle and high schools over the past several years increased the likelihood that kids who vape nicotine will transition to vaping marijuana," said Richter, who was not involved in the study.</p> <p>Vaping, she added, has become "normalized," while at the same time "pro-marijuana messages" have grown.</p> <p>"Vaped products are also typically seen as safer and healthier than smoked products, because when e-cigarettes were originally introduced to the market, they were advertised as safer alternatives to cigarette smoking," Richter said.</p> <p>But vaping is far from benign. And when it comes to marijuana, Keyes said, vaping can actually deliver a higher dose of THC than smoking does. THC is the active ingredient behind marijuana's "high."</p>

That higher THC dose, Richter said, can "hook young people to the substance and keep them coming back for more."

And while vaping does not involve smoke, the liquids used in vaporizers do contain potentially toxic chemicals, Richter pointed out. Vitamin E acetate, an additive in some THC-containing vaping products, has been linked to severe -- and sometimes fatal -- lung injuries.

That lack of smoke is also a problem of sorts: Kids can conceal marijuana vaping more easily than smoking, Richter said, because there's no telltale pot odor.

The new findings -- published Thursday in the journal *Addiction* -- are based on more than 51,000 U.S. teens who took part in annual health survey between 2017 and 2019.

During that time, marijuana vaping rose among boys and girls, with a large spike in those using at least once a week: from 2.9% to 6.2% among boys, and from 1.3% to 4.7% among girls.

By 2019, marijuana vaping was more popular than traditional pot smoking among all racial and ethnic groups, except for Black teens.

Keyes also pointed to a finding from a previous study of the same group of teens: High school seniors reported an especially sharp rise in marijuana vaping -- with the prevalence nearly tripling, from 5% to 14%.

The vaping craze presents parents with some difficult issues, according to Keyes and Richter. Not only is marijuana use harder to notice, but kids are also seeing marijuana vaping products marketed everywhere, including on social media, they pointed out.

"It's not a matter of whether your child will be exposed to this, but when," Keyes said. "The best thing parents can do is to talk to their kids about marijuana use, and start early -- in middle school."

Richter agreed, encouraging parents to take a "health rather than a punitive approach" to those conversations.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Russia cuts off natural gas to Finland</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/21/finland-gas-supply/4891653147539/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/21/finland-gas-supply/4891653147539/</a>
GIST	<p>May 21 (UPI) -- Russia cut off its natural gas supply to Finland's state-owned energy firm, Gasum, the company announced Saturday.</p> <p>"Natural gas supplies to Finland under Gasum's supply contract have been cut off," Gasum said in a statement. The energy firm added that it will instead use other sources for its filling stations.</p> <p>Gasum warned Friday that Russia would cut off the supply over the weekend.</p> <p>"It has highly regrettable that natural gas supplies under our supply contract will now be halted," CEO Mika Wiljanen said in the statement. "However, we have been carefully preparing for this situation and provided that there will be no disruptions in the gas transmission network, we will be able to supply all our customers with gas in coming months."</p> <p>The company also warned in a statement Wednesday of "a real risk" that natural gas imports from Russia could end this week under the company's gas supply contract ending.</p> <p>The prior day it announced in a statement that it planned to take its natural gas supply contract with Russian Gazprom Export into arbitration after rejecting its requirement announced in April to switch from paying in euros to rubles.</p>

	<p>"In this situation, Gasum had no choice but to take the contract to arbitration," Wiljanen said in the statement at the time. "In this challenging situation, we will do our utmost to be able to supply our Finnish customers with the energy they need."</p> <p>The gas cutoff comes after Finland recently formally applied to join NATO to strengthen its security amid the Russia-Ukraine war.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 US denies plan sink Russia Black Sea fleet</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2022-05-20/pentagon-denies-ukrainian-claims-of-plan-to-destroy-russias-black-sea-fleet">https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2022-05-20/pentagon-denies-ukrainian-claims-of-plan-to-destroy-russias-black-sea-fleet</a>
GIST	<p>The Pentagon on Friday denied that it is forging plans to destroy one of Russia's <a href="#">most consequential navy fleets</a>, despite assertions to that effect from the Ukrainian government. But officials did leave open the possibility of <a href="#">new weapons shipments</a> that would dramatically change the scope of naval warfare in the region.</p> <p>Anton Herashchenko, an official adviser to the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs, <a href="#">tweeted</a> late Thursday, "The US is preparing a plan to destroy the Black Sea Fleet," according to a translation, in an attempt to force access to strategic ports that Russia has blockaded.</p> <p>"I can tell you definitively that that's not true," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters Thursday afternoon when asked about the Ukrainian claim.</p> <p>Kirby did not, however, refute subsequent statements from Herashchenko – and confirmed by anonymous American officials to several news outlets – that the U.S. is considering sending specialized anti-ship Harpoon missiles with a range of 200 miles in future weapons shipments to Ukraine. Some concerns have emerged about whether sending those particular weapons would provoke a response from Russia against U.S. ships or regional interests.</p> <p>"We are talking to the Ukrainians every day," Kirby added, revealing that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had spoken with Ukrainian Minister of Defense Oleksiy Reznikov earlier on Friday. "When we have decisions, we come right out here and issue a press release."</p> <p>Control of the seas off Ukraine's coast has become among the most high-profile issues facing Western officials supporting the government in Kyiv against the Russian invaders. Despite some successes in recent weeks – notably the sinking of the Russian flagship Moskva – warships loyal to Moscow have succeeded in exerting pressure on Ukraine.</p> <p>"They continue to be able to, from a maritime perspective, be able to blockade major Ukrainian ports, like Odessa," Kirby said. "There's still nothing getting in economically."</p> <p>British intelligence asserted this week that Russian President Vladimir Putin had fired an admiral overseeing Black Sea Fleet operations following the Moskva's sinking, among other shake-ups in Russia's military leadership involved in the Ukraine invasion.</p> <p>Russian state news on Friday highlighted statements from friendly lawmakers in the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula celebrating Russia's control of the Black Sea and adjacent Sea of Azov.</p> <p>And Moscow on Thursday announced the frigate Admiral Makarov will take over as flagship of the Black Sea Fleet following the Moskva's sinking – reportedly from a missile strike for which Ukraine has claimed credit.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Covid surge drastically undercounted?</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-05-20/latest-covid-19-surge-in-u-s-is-dramatically-undercounted">https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-05-20/latest-covid-19-surge-in-u-s-is-dramatically-undercounted</a>
GIST	<p>Federal health officials this week warned Americans that <a href="#">coronavirus</a> cases are at a high level, but with a caveat: Estimates are sure to be a significant undercount of the true infections.</p> <p>“Depending on which tracker you use, we're at about 100,000 infections a day,” White House COVID-19 response coordinator Ashish Jha said at a press briefing on Wednesday. “And we know that the number of infections is actually substantially higher than that – hard to know exactly how many, but we know that a lot of people are getting diagnosed using home tests.”</p> <p>Rapid tests, which offer fast results and can be taken anywhere, grant people a convenient way to determine if they have the coronavirus. The Biden administration this week started offering a third round of <a href="#">free rapid tests</a>, and Jha said it has seen “really impressive demand” for the tests.</p> <p>But the rise in at-home testing comes with a downside – possibly hundreds of thousands of cases are going unreported to health departments. Some experts say cases could be five to 10 times higher than the official numbers, making the current surge much more wide-reaching than it seems on the surface.</p> <p>“I've been a huge fan of home tests for the last two years,” Jha said. “But what that means is we're clearly undercounting infections.”</p> <p><b>The Dangers of Undercounting Cases</b></p> <p>Experts agree that general trends presented in coronavirus metrics are more important than individual data points, but missing coronavirus cases still present some issues.</p> <p>One of the biggest problems could be lacking data on exactly who is getting the virus. Such data is vital for deciding where to direct resources and how to make policy.</p> <p>“If we are at a point where our telescope is pointed to a completely different part of the sky, we have less of an understanding of what our case numbers mean and what we are missing,” says Jennifer Nuzzo, an epidemiologist at Brown University.</p> <p>And certain populations are more likely than others to be left out of the picture. Federal funds that covered tests for the uninsured dried up last month. Meanwhile, a two-pack of rapid tests costs \$24 at major retailers. These factors cause an income barrier for who is getting tested, according to Nuzzo.</p> <p>“The fact that we are doing less testing now in people with lower incomes worries me that we are missing surveillance in possibly one of our highest risk populations,” Nuzzo says.</p> <p>Perry Halkitis, the dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health, concurs that the added expenses mean that only those who can afford testing are getting it. He notes that such costs place the burden on poorer Americans, much like other health crises.</p> <p>“At the beginning, it affects everybody. But diseases over time as they evolve tend to lodge themselves in the most vulnerable,” Halkitis says.</p> <p>Additionally, missing coronavirus cases means experts could have difficulties spotting a new variant when it pops up.</p> <p>“If people are diagnosing themselves at home, or they're just not getting tested at all, we are missing the opportunity to sequence and see if there is a new variant causing those infections,” Nuzzo says.</p> <p>It's important to start studying a new variant as soon as possible because the mutations in the virus could lead to changes in the disease. For example, knowing that a new variant renders vaccines ineffective or targets certain populations would lead to modifications in mitigation strategies.</p>



The trend is also an issue in other countries.

“Due to testing and sequencing reducing in many countries, it is increasingly difficult to know where the virus is and how it’s mutating,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the World Health Organization, said this week at a press briefing.

And the virus hasn’t stopped changing. In the U.S., for example, a new subvariant of omicron is poised to become the dominant strain in the coming weeks. It’s believed to be 25% more transmissible than BA.2, or “stealth omicron,” which is the current dominant strain. More omicron subvariants that the U.S. has yet to see are also circulating in other countries.

### **Future Testing Concerns**

While the U.S. just this week started sending a third round of free home tests to Americans, testing problems are lurking on the horizon.

Jha warned that test manufacturing companies are laying off workers and shutting down factory lines. That could lead to another testing shortage when the next coronavirus surge hits.

“In the upcoming weeks, we’re going to see them sell off their equipment and get out of this business,” Jha said. “And we may very well find ourselves without additional resources in the fall, without enough tests, no domestic manufacturing capability, and us having to rely on other countries and other manufacturers outside the United States to make sure that we can get tests for the American people.”

Testing issues are not a new problem for the U.S. Both the delta and omicron waves resulted in testing shortages, prompting experts to urge the administration to come up with a long-term supply strategy. But that’s proved easier said than done, as domestic concerns over the coronavirus have declined and Congress has shown little appetite for authorizing additional funds to fight the pandemic.

“From the start, America has failed to do enough COVID-19 testing,” Biden said from the White House in September.

As the administration has pushed Congress for renewed coronavirus funds, federal health officials have been warning that future surges could infect about 100 million Americans.

Many experts agree that future surges expected in the fall and winter could be problematic. Of course, new coronavirus cases aren’t as concerning as they once were, considering vaccines and treatments are widely available. But waning immunity opens the door to possibly more severe infections.

“This is when we’re going to see more cases, we’re going to see even more hospitalizations, we’re going to see even more deaths, because it is very likely at that point in the fall that people will have lost their immunity if they have not been fully vaccinated or boosted,” Halkitis says.

The University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation predicts that case counts will see a small peak in May or early June before going back down.

“We don’t expect a major surge from that,” the institute wrote in a blog this month. “We certainly expect quite large numbers in the winter, not so much in the fall – perhaps as many as 30% of the U.S. population getting infected through the winter with Omicron. But we expect the consequences to be much, much lower because of antivirals.”

Home testing paired with reduced reporting from local health departments has made the pandemic more difficult to track, according to the institute. And should domestic test manufacturing further erode as Jha suggested, it will be difficult to rebuild.

	Once testing infrastructure erodes, Nuzzo says, “it’s really hard to build back when you need it.”
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Forest Service to halt prescribed burns</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/forest-service-to-halt-prescribed-burns-after-destructive-new-mexico-wildfire-11653081275?mod=hp_listb_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/forest-service-to-halt-prescribed-burns-after-destructive-new-mexico-wildfire-11653081275?mod=hp_listb_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>SANTA FE, N.M.—The chief of the Forest Service on Friday ordered a temporary halt to prescribed burns in the wake of a catastrophic wildfire in New Mexico accidentally sparked by the agency last month.</p> <p>In a statement, Forest Service Chief Randy Moore said fire conditions were too extreme to safely conduct the burn operations, and the agency would conduct a 90-day national review of its prescribed-burn policies.</p> <p>“Lessons learned and any resulting program improvements will be in place prior to resuming prescribed burning,” Mr. Moore said.</p> <p>The move puts a stop on Forest Service land to a tool many fire officials and researchers say is vital to combat worsening wildfires across the West. It comes as some of those same people also say the burns themselves, which are intentionally set to reduce overgrown forests and brush, have grown riskier amid more-extreme weather and persistent drought.</p> <p>That danger is currently on display in the mountains of northern New Mexico, where the largest wildfire in state history has been driven by a prescribed burn lighted on April 6 by the Forest Service. Powerful, erratic winds pushed the burn, ignited in a forest of ponderosa pines, to grow out of control and merge with another nearby wildfire. The combined Hermit’s Peak-Calf Canyon fire has charred 303,000 acres, destroyed around 200 homes and forced several thousand people to flee. It is still burning.</p> <p>New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham earlier this month called for a temporary halt to prescribed-burn operations, saying they have become too dangerous.</p> <p>“There will be no prescribed burning in New Mexico. That’s been made very clear to our partners,” the Democrat said at a recent news conference. “We’re done.”</p> <p>Researchers and forest officials say the West needs far more prescribed burns to avoid more disastrous wildfires in the future. Forests in states such as New Mexico and California are badly overgrown because of past policies of strict fire suppression and dry conditions. With more periods of extreme weather caused by climate change, these forests are increasingly susceptible to catastrophic fires, according to researchers who study wildfire behavior.</p> <p>“If we sit on our hands and just wait for wildfires to burn the landscape, then we’re going to have even worse outcomes,” said Lenya Quinn-Davidson, fire adviser with the University of California Cooperative Extension, which focuses on agricultural and environmental issues.</p> <p>Officials say prescribed burns are typically done with careful planning and almost always occur without incident. The Forest Service, which ignites an average of 4,500 prescribed fires each year, said 99.84% go according to plan. About six annually escape the preset parameters.</p> <p>In New Mexico, the recent extreme weather—especially sustained, high winds—are at the crux of the debate over prescribed burns. According to National Weather Service data, there were red-flag warnings, which indicate extreme fire danger, for the prescribed-burn area on the two days before April 6, but not the day of the burn.</p> <p>That morning’s forecast called for extremely dry conditions, sustained winds of 10 to 15 miles an hour and possible gusts up to 25 miles an hour.</p>

Ms. Lujan Grisham said it was negligent for the Forest Service to conduct the burn given the wind and drought conditions in the region.

The Forest Service declined to comment on the burn that led to the Hermit's Peak-Calf Canyon wildfire and hasn't released its plan for the operation. The agency said it is conducting an internal review and would publish its findings.

"The [U.S. Department of Agriculture] Forest Service is committed to conducting prescribed fire under safe conditions," the agency said. "In rare circumstances, conditions change, and prescribed burns move outside the planned project area and become wildfires. It is imperative that we learn from these experiences."

Joshua Sloan, an associate professor of forestry at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, a city of 13,000 near the fire, said the blaze showed that fire managers will have to start looking for longer periods of safe weather before proceeding with a burn.

"We're probably going to have to start looking for a much larger and longer window of forecast safe weather conditions," said Mr. Sloan. "And I think that's going to make for very difficult, very narrow burn windows going forward."

Dan Dallas, supervisor of the Rio Grande National Forest in Colorado, was given an allotment of 7,000 acres by the Forest Service to burn or "treat" this year before October. So far he hasn't been able to conduct any large-scale burns because weather conditions are too risky, he said.

Going forward, he said, planning for the burns should include more consideration of extreme weather, which is becoming more common because of climate change. That same approach, calculated through computer models, is being used by wildland firefighters to predict fire behavior.

"That way we can do a better job of accounting for something to go wrong," he said.

Prescribed burns have occasionally grown out of control in the past and shaken public support for their use, including a 2000 blaze near Los Alamos, N.M., that destroyed about 280 homes. Another controlled burn in Bastrop County, Texas, last January that was planned for 150 acres grew to nearly 1,000 because of high winds, and forced the evacuation of more than 100 homes.

California officials and the Forest Service agreed in 2020 to use controlled burns and other methods to thin forests by one million acres a year by 2025. But the state is far from reaching that goal with the current rate of thinning averaging about 100,000 acres annually.

Part of the problem, researchers say, is that the time of year in which controlled burns can safely be done is narrowing across the West, as a warming climate dries out vegetation faster in the spring and delays the onset of rains in the fall. In California, the period for safely conducting prescribed burns in winter and spring is being reduced by one day annually, according to a recently published study by researchers at three University of California institutions.

Mr. Moore said the Forest Service's pause would have a minimal impact on the bulk of the agency's burn operations, which take place between September and May.

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HEADLINE	05/22 Russia claims complete control of Mariupol
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-says-it-has-taken-complete-control-of-mariupol-after-surrender-of-last-defenders-11653125925?mod=hp_lead_pos4">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-says-it-has-taken-complete-control-of-mariupol-after-surrender-of-last-defenders-11653125925?mod=hp_lead_pos4</a>
GIST	KYIV, Ukraine—Russia said it had taken complete control of the southeastern port city of Mariupol on Saturday after the surrender of the last remaining Ukrainian forces there, while Moscow's troops pressed an offensive in the country's east.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky described the soldiers and marines who had defended Mariupol through a monthslong siege as national heroes. He said the military had told them to get out and save their lives.

Russia's Defense Ministry said a final group of 531 Ukrainian fighters had been evacuated from bunkers under the sprawling Azovstal steel plant to Russian-controlled territory, bringing the total number of prisoners taken from the plant to 2,439.

"The underground facilities of the enterprise, where the militants were hiding, came under the full control of the Russian armed forces," the ministry said.

Completing the capture of Mariupol was a long-sought victory for Russia, which has faced fierce resistance and struggled to gain ground against Ukraine's armed forces since it launched its invasion on Feb. 24.

By holding out for weeks in ever-smaller pockets, Ukrainian defenders tied up large numbers of Russian troops, preventing their deployment elsewhere.

By the time of their surrender, the resistance at the Azovstal plant had more symbolic than strategic significance. Russian forces have for weeks controlled a land corridor linking the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, with the eastern Donbas region, where Russia also has controlled territory since 2014.

Russia's state-run RIA Novosti news agency on Saturday published video reports from supermarkets in a Russian-held part of the Zaporizhzhia region and the Russian-occupied city of Kherson in southeastern Ukraine, saying they were stocked from goods coming via Crimea.

On Thursday, the International Committee of the Red Cross said it had registered hundreds of Ukrainian prisoners of war from the Azovstal plant. The group is visiting prisoners of war on all sides, it said.

Leonid Slutsky, head of the international affairs committee in Russia's lower house of parliament, said Saturday that the fate of the Mariupol fighters should be decided by a tribunal and there shouldn't be a prisoner exchange, according to Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

In earlier remarks carried by Russia's Interfax news agency, Mr. Slutsky said that Moscow would explore the possibility of swapping the Mariupol fighters for Viktor Medvedchuk, a detained Ukrainian ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In Donbas, Russian forces launched a major offensive Saturday on the remaining Ukrainian-held territory in the eastern province of Luhansk, Ukrainian officials said.

The renewed offensive in Severodonetsk was aimed at expanding the territory already under control of a Russian-backed separatist government that calls itself the Luhansk People's Republic.

Officials said Russian forces maintained a control line to the east side of the Inhulets River following efforts to destroy a bridge crossing to prevent Ukrainian advances.

Capturing Luhansk and Donetsk provinces, much of which make up Ukraine's industrial Donbas region, would allow Moscow to claim a victory after announcing last month that this was now its objective.

Speaking in the Russian-controlled part of Donetsk on Saturday, Mr. Slutsky, who is a member of Russia's negotiating team in the stalled peace talks with Ukraine, said he expects the Luhansk and Donetsk people's republics to determine their political futures like Crimea in the coming months, according to Russian state news agency TASS.

Russia annexed Crimea after pushing through a referendum that the United Nations deemed invalid. Mr. Putin recognized the Luhansk and Donetsk republics before sending Russian troops into Ukraine in February.

In an interview with The Wall Street Journal in his Kyiv office earlier in the week, Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, one of the architects of Ukraine's war effort, said Ukraine urgently needs medium- and long-range missile systems, large-caliber artillery and strike aircraft to offset Russian advantages in manpower and equipment as it mounts a counteroffensive.

Gen. Budanov said Ukraine would keep fighting until it evicts Russian forces from all of its territory.

"I don't know any borders except the borders of 1991," Gen. Budanov said, referring to the year of Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union. "Who can force Ukraine to freeze the conflict? This is a war of all Ukrainians, and if someone in the world thinks that they can dictate to Ukraine the conditions under which it can or cannot defend itself, then they are seriously mistaken."

In the northeast, the governor of Ukraine's Kharkiv region said Russian forces continued to fire on the towns of Oleksiyivka and Saltivka, and a market in the city of Kharkiv was on fire due to missile strikes.

Oleh Sinegubov also said on his official Telegram channel that Russia's bombardment of the Kharkiv region has resulted in the destruction of 90% of homes in the village of Vilkhivka.

Mr. Zelensky has condemned an airstrike that hit a cultural center in the Kharkiv region on Friday, describing the attack as "absolute evil, absolute stupidity." Seven people were injured in that strike.

Meanwhile in Kyiv, the first trial of a Russian soldier in Ukraine was under way. Mr. Zelensky said on his official Telegram channel that Ukraine "will find and bring to justice all those who give and carry out criminal orders."

Ukraine is set to receive another tranche of aid from the U.S. after President Biden on Saturday signed a nearly \$40 billion package of financial and military support. The legislation, approved by the Senate on Thursday, includes provisions such as supplies and training for Ukrainian forces, humanitarian aid for refugees and economic assistance for Ukraine's government.

In Russia, the head of Russia's space agency, Roscosmos, said it would begin delivering new Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missiles to the Russian armed forces in the autumn. Russia says the missile can hit targets anywhere in the world.

Mr. Putin said while overseeing its first test-launch last month that it would make those threatening his country "think twice."

The Russian Foreign Ministry on Saturday published a list of 963 U.S. citizens permanently barred from entering the country for "inciting Russophobia." The list includes Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer as well as several dozen prominent officials and business leaders Russia has already barred from entering the country, such as President Biden.

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HEADLINE	05/21 People feeling the market meltdown
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-market-is-melting-down-and-people-are-feeling-it-my-stomach-is-churning-all-day-11653105601?mod=hp_lead_pos9">https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-market-is-melting-down-and-people-are-feeling-it-my-stomach-is-churning-all-day-11653105601?mod=hp_lead_pos9</a>
GIST	<p>The last time Todd Jones heard this kind of panic in his clients' voices, it was 2008 and the global financial system was on the brink of collapse.</p> <p>Mr. Jones, the chief investment officer at investment advisory firm Gratus Capital in Atlanta, now finds himself fielding similar calls. Two clients, both retirees, asked him this month to move their portfolios</p>

entirely to cash. Mr. Jones persuaded them to stay the course, saying the best way for investors to achieve their goals is to still be in the market when it eventually rebounds.

“Those people were not in a good place,” said Mr. Jones, 43. “They had a lot of anxiety about goals and dreams and being able to live their lifestyles.”

Stocks, bonds and other assets are getting hammered this year as investors wrestle anew with the possibility that the U.S. is headed toward recession. On Friday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average recorded its eighth straight week of declines, its longest such streak since 1932. The S&P 500 flirted with bear-market territory.

Families are watching the investments they meant for down payments or college tuition or retirement shrink, day after day. They’ve seen big retailers like [Walmart](#) and Target record their steepest stock drops in decades this week, after earnings that signaled an end to the pandemic spending boom.

The market turmoil has [scared corporate chieftains away from taking their companies public](#). In Silicon Valley, dreams of multibillion-dollar valuations have been [replaced by the reality](#) of layoffs and recoiling investors.

Stock prices have been hurt by forces that appear in nearly every cycle, such as rising interest rates and slowing growth. There are also idiosyncratic ones, including the rapid return of inflation after decades at a low ebb, a wobbling Chinese economy and a war in Ukraine that has shocked commodity markets.

The Federal Reserve has raised interest rates twice this year and plans to keep doing so to curb inflation, but that makes investors worry it will slow the economy too fast or by too much.

To investors it can feel there is no safe place. While the vast majority of individual investors are holding steady, that is in part because customary alternatives don’t offer much relief. Bonds, normally a haven when stocks are falling, have also been pummeled. The cryptocurrency market, pitched as a counterweight to traditional stocks, is sinking.

For Michael Hwang, a 23-year-old auditor in San Francisco, the market’s tumble means he could wind up taking out loans to get an M.B.A. He has been hoping to pay his tuition out of pocket when he eventually goes back to school.

For Arthur McCaffrey, an 80-year-old retired research scientist from Boston, it means wondering if he’ll live to see his investments recover.

Rick Rieder, the head of fixed income at giant asset manager BlackRock Inc., likened the state of financial markets to a Category 5 hurricane. The veteran bond trader has been in the business for three decades and said the rapid price swings are unlike anything he has seen.

“My stomach is churning all day,” he said. “There are so many crosscurrents of uncertainty, and we aren’t going to get closure on any of them for weeks, if not months.”

Investors are used to the Fed stepping in to calm markets, but many of the dynamics rattling stocks, bonds, currencies and commodities are out of the central bank’s control, said Mr. Rieder: “The Fed can’t solve the supply shortage of corn or fertilizers, or the inability to get natural gas into Europe. They can’t build a sufficient inventory of homes.”

The plunge is a U-turn from stocks’ runup in 2020 and 2021. Then, unusually low interest rates and a surging money supply—byproducts of the government’s efforts to stave off a downturn—pushed stock indexes to repeated new highs. Some investors say the decline was long overdue and, now that it has arrived, could be difficult to repair.

Melissa Firestone, a 44-year-old economist specializing in the energy market, sold many of her individual stocks and bought a fund that shorts the S&P 500, betting on a drop. "The Fed is going too far, inflation is a nightmare and the real-estate market is going to crash," she said.

Keith Yocum, a novelist and retired publishing executive who is 70, moved a third of his savings into money-market funds last year. Mr. Yocum doesn't love keeping so much money in cash, especially with inflation eroding its value, but sees few better options.

In October, when stock prices were still hitting records, Craig Bartels moved most of his 401(k) and individual retirement account savings into money-market funds. Soon, he sold his cryptocurrency holdings and started shorting homebuilding stocks and Tesla Inc. through a brokerage account.

A 46-year-old real-estate broker in Zionsville, Ind., Mr. Bartels had looked to the distant past for advice, reading Ray Dalio's recent book on economic history and Adrian Goldsworthy's "How Rome Fell: Death of a Superpower."

"This sounds like us right now," he thought.

His 20-year-old son, a college student, had told him he was trading a few thousand dollars through a Robinhood account. To Mr. Bartels, it looked like another sign of a coming reckoning.

A generation earlier, he was a day-trading college student himself. He did well, he said, but knew many who were "throwing money at internet stocks and had no idea what they were doing." The dot-com bubble of the late 1990s soon popped. Today, Mr. Bartels is happy he changed course when he did. "I don't think we're anywhere near the bottom," he said.

Don McLeod, a former research manager at a Manhattan law firm, retired four years ago when the markets were strong. He checked his 401(k) account almost every day with glee.

When stocks started to turn in January, he continued checking daily out of fear, until the losses became too steep. By early May, his retirement accounts had fallen 25% in five months.

Mr. McLeod hopes the U.S. isn't headed for a repeat of the "stagflation" of the 1970s. "When you're banking on that money saved over your lifetime to carry you through and it starts to go away, you feel helpless," he said. "I don't want to go back to work at 66."

Susan Wagner, a recent retiree who moved from Chicago to New Mexico's Rio Rancho with her wife in 2020, took their retirement money out of the markets altogether this month.

"The anxiety was literally me losing sleep, tossing and turning at night wondering how much more we were going to lose," Ms. Wagner said. Her wife, a former radiologist, was hesitant but eventually agreed. "It was too nerve-racking, and I was quite emotional about it," Ms. Wagner said. "I was very upset by what was happening."

Jim Cahn, chief investment officer of Wealth Enhancement Group in Minneapolis, said his clients are more nervous now than in 2008, the year of the financial crisis. The question he's getting: "Where can I go to stop getting poorer?"

The firm held webinars for clients in the market's frothiest days last year, warning against loading up on tech stocks and highflying pandemic names such as Peloton, Mr. Cahn said. Lately the webinars have a different theme: Don't panic.

The firm is looking at commodities, which tend to protect against inflation and are getting a boost from the war in Ukraine, and municipal bonds, which Mr. Cahn said are starting to look attractive.



Technology shares that soared in recent years, like Facebook parent Meta Platforms Inc. and Netflix Inc., have been hit especially hard. Dismaying results or darkening outlooks have cratered tech stocks and, at painful moments, helped pull down the broader market.

There have been so many bad days they've started to blur together, said Sonu Kalra, portfolio manager of Fidelity Investments's Blue Chip Growth Fund.

Mr. Kalra was sitting in his suburban Boston home office in early February when Meta shocked Wall Street with disappointing earnings. As he watched its shares slide in after-hours trading, he felt angry at himself for failing to heed earlier warning signs.

"You feel a lot of pain and start questioning: 'What could I have done differently?' " he said. "But you can't cry over spilled milk. You have to move forward."

At the time, he thought Meta's issues were idiosyncratic and not a sign of a broad withdrawal from growth stocks. That came later, when Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent energy prices higher. "Oil permeates everything," he said.

On Wednesday, Cole Smead, a portfolio manager at Smead Capital Management Inc., woke up early in Phoenix. Target, whose stock makes up about 5% of the Smead Value Fund, was set to report earnings. Target stock was down double digits in premarket trading. Mr. Smead put on a suit and headed in to his office.

That morning, Target hovered at 25% below Tuesday's close. Mr. Smead decided it wasn't productive to stare at a screen and watch his fifth-largest position in freefall. He picked up a book, the biography of George Hearst, the silver miner father of William Randolph Hearst.

"I figured he'll probably teach me more than the markets will teach me that day," he said.

Conventional investing wisdom says that over time, stock markets go up. Countless investors watched their savings grow by staying put in a market that rose sharply in the decade after the financial crisis. Those who held tight when the market crashed in early 2020 were rewarded when stocks resumed their upward climb within weeks.

To some market players, this year's decline feels different. The government's extraordinary stimulus measures that pushed the economy into a V-shaped recovery in 2020 have largely run out, replaced by policies aimed at controlling inflation. While the debate about whether a recession is on the way is far from settled, there is broad consensus the U.S. has entered a period of slower growth.

Mr. McCaffrey, the 80-year-old retired research scientist, has been buying Apple shares in recent weeks, automating the purchases for when the price is below a certain level. But overall, watching shares of his favored tech companies erode has been a gloomy experience. Apple is down 23% so far this year.

"It's getting worse for people in my age group," Mr. McCaffrey said, "simply because we don't have time to wait for it to come back."

It takes a lot to shake Kevin Landis, a fund manager whose tech-focused fund was battered by the tech wreckage of the early 2000s. But when Netflix announced disappointing quarterly results in April, Mr. Landis, sitting in his home office overlooking his tranquil suburban San Jose backyard, felt as if he'd been hit by an earthquake.

Mr. Landis had reason to be concerned: Roku, another streaming company, made up 14% of his tech fund at the end of March. He says he hasn't sold any shares, even though Roku's stock has sunk by nearly 60% this year.

	“Probably the defining difference this time is last time I could just storm out of the office and go home,” he said. “This time, I’m working from home. So there’s no escaping it.”
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Australia’s new prime minister</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/22/australian-election-2022-anthony-albanese-humbled-to-be-next-pm-as-voters-abandon-coalition">https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/22/australian-election-2022-anthony-albanese-humbled-to-be-next-pm-as-voters-abandon-coalition</a>
GIST	<p>Anthony Albanese will be Australia’s next prime minister, leaving the Coalition in disarray after it lost more than a dozen seats to Labor and independents in an election that has transformed the country’s political landscape.</p> <p>Declaring victory shortly before midnight on Saturday, Albanese thanked voters for the “extraordinary honour” of becoming the nation’s 31st prime minister, and said he would work in government to bring Australians together.</p> <p>He pledged to implement the Uluru statement of the heart in full – which includes constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians – promised “kindness” to those in need, and declared that “together we can end the climate wars”.</p> <p>“Tonight the Australian people have voted for change. I am humbled by this victory and I’m honoured to be given the opportunity to serve as the 31st prime minister of Australia,” Albanese said.</p> <p>With 60% of the vote counted, Labor was ahead in 73 seats and on track to win enough seats to form majority government, with huge swings in Western Australia likely to flip at least three seats to Labor.</p> <p>The Coalition lost a swag of key marginals to Labor, including Chisholm and Higgins in Victoria, Reid and Robertson in NSW, Boothby in South Australia, and Pearce, Swan and Hasluck in WA. A dozen more seats were too close to call.</p> <p>The Liberal party was also expected to lose six previously safe inner city seats to so-called teal independents, including Josh Frydenberg’s seat of Kooyong, with the Coalition’s numbers likely to fall to the low 60s in the 151 seat house of representatives. There could be as many as 16 MPs on the crossbench, a record number.</p> <p>Albanese said that as leader he would respect all Australians, including those who had not voted for him, saying he would “seek to get your vote next time”.</p> <p>“We are the greatest country on Earth, but we can have an even better future if we seize the opportunities that are right there in front of us,” Albanese said.</p> <p>“I want to seek our common purpose and promote unity and not fear. Optimism, not fear and division.</p> <p>“It is what I have sought to do throughout my political life and what I will bring to the leadership of our country.</p> <p>“I want to find that common ground where together we can plant our dreams, to unite around our shared love of this country, our shared faith in Australia’s future, our shared values of fairness and opportunity and hard work, and kindness to those in need.”</p> <p>Albanese said arrangements were in place for him and incoming foreign affairs minister Penny Wong to be sworn in on Monday to allow him to travel to Tokyo for the quad meeting with the US president, Joe Biden, the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, and the Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida, on Tuesday.</p>

Albanese, who becomes only the fourth leader to win government for Labor since the second world war, also pointed to his beginnings as the son of a single mother on a disability pension, saying he hoped his backstory would inspire Australians.

“Every parent wants more for the next generation than they had. My mother dreamt of a better life for me and I hope that my journey in life inspires Australians to reach for the stars,” he said.

“I want Australia to continue to be a country that no matter where you live, who you worship, who you love or what your last name is, that places no restrictions on your journey in life.”

The prime minister, Scott Morrison, made his concession speech shortly before 11pm on Saturday, describing the result as a “very difficult” night for the Liberal and Nationals MPs who had lost their seat.

“I have always believed in Australians and their judgment and I’ve always been prepared to accept their verdict, and tonight they have delivered their verdict and I congratulate Anthony Albanese and the Labor party and I wish him and his government all the very best,” Morrison said.

He confirmed he would stand down as leader at the next meeting of the Liberal party room. Without Frydenberg in the parliament, Peter Dutton is seen as the most likely MP to replace him as leader.

Reflecting on the result, Morrison said he accepted the “burden of responsibility” of the loss, but also pointed to the “time of great upheaval over these past few years”.

“It has imposed a heavy price on our country and on all Australians and I think all Australians have felt that deeply, and we’ve seen in our own politics a great deal of disruption as the people have voted today with major parties having one of the lowest primary votes we’ve ever seen.”

Nationally, the Liberal party recorded a 4.5% swing against it on primary votes, while Labor’s primary vote was also down about 2%.

The result showed both major parties posting their lowest primary vote in the modern era, with Labor’s primary vote at 32% and the Coalition’s primary vote at 35%.

The Greens recorded a 2.3% lift in their primary vote, enjoying a boost among the record high level of support for independents and minor parties.

Labor was increasingly confident it would be able to win the 76 seats needed to form majority government after a massive primary swing against the Coalition in WA of 11%, with Labor confident of picking up at least three seats in the state and as many as five.

The devastating result for Liberals in teal seats looked likely to unseat Frydenberg in the Melbourne seat of Kooyong, with the independent Monique Ryan ahead, along with the Liberal MP Tim Wilson who was defeated by the independent Zoe Daniel in the seat of Goldstein.

In Sydney, the moderate Liberals Dave Sharma, Trent Zimmerman and Jason Falinski were also forecast to lose their seats to Climate 200-backed independents, as was Celia Hammond in the previously blue-ribbon seat of Curtin in Perth.

The Greens were expected to pick up the seat of Ryan from the Liberal party, and are neck and neck with the Labor party in the seats of Brisbane and Griffith.

While stopping short of conceding the seat, Frydenberg said it would be very difficult for him to make up the lead enjoyed by Ryan, who was ahead by about 4% with most booths counted on Saturday night.

“While it’s mathematically possible that we win in Kooyong, it’s definitely difficult,” he said.

“To be the deputy leader of our party has been an enormous privilege and to serve as Scott Morrison’s deputy, a person of great decency, a person who loves his family, a person who is of deep faith and a person who has shown extra ordinary leadership in extraordinary times.”

Morrison praised Frydenberg’s role as treasurer, describing him as a “brother”, and said he wanted his former treasurer to remain in parliament – endorsing him as a future leader.

“I am looking forward to those counts improving because Josh Frydenberg should be remaining in this Liberal party and remaining in the federal parliament because he is an outstanding individual and leader of our country.”

After spending close to \$100m during the election campaign, Clive Palmer was only able to secure about 5% of the vote, despite its vote topping 10% in a swag of outer metropolitan seats in Sydney and Melbourne.

Despite its election loss, the Liberal party will win back the seat of Hughes from the United Australia party defector Craig Kelly, and was also on track to pick up the seat of Gilmore on the NSW south coast, which was contested by the former NSW transport minister Andrew Constance.

The result was too close to call in a swag of other key seats, with Lyons in Tasmania another possible gain for the Liberals, and Labor still hopeful of picking up Tangney in WA and Bennelong in NSW.

In a shock result for Labor, its home affairs spokeswoman, Kristina Keneally, was likely to lose the previously safe Labor seat of Fowler to the independent Dai Le, after the party suffered a 20% swing against it.

But in Parramatta, a seat targeted by the Coalition after Labor parachuted Andrew Charlton in, Labor secured a swing towards it and was on track to comfortably hold the seat.

Labor may also face the prospect of a progressive-leaning Senate, with the Greens set to pick up a seat in Queensland and SA, while Labor is likely to win a seat from the Liberals in WA.

Labor has lost a Senate position to the Greens in NSW, while the Liberals are also set to lose a number of seats to minor parties, including the UAP in Victoria, One Nation in Queensland and the Jacqui Lambie Network in Tasmania.

This would give Labor, the Greens and the progressive independent David Pocock a slim majority, controlling 39 votes in the 76 seat upper house.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Drought, wind, heat ‘explosive fire behavior’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/20/wildfires-us-new-mexico-texas-colorado">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/20/wildfires-us-new-mexico-texas-colorado</a>
GIST	<p>Expanding drought conditions, coupled with hot and dry weather, extreme wind and unstable atmospheric conditions, have led to explosive fire behavior in the south-western US, federal officials warned on Friday.</p> <p>The warning came as a huge wildfire, currently the largest in the US, continued to burn across <a href="#">New Mexico</a> on Friday, as fire crews also battled blazes in Texas and Colorado.</p> <p>Randy Moore, the US Forest Service chief, cited the extreme conditions on Friday in announcing a pause on prescribed fire operations on all national forest lands while his agency conducts a 90-day review of protocols, decision-making tools and practices ahead of planned operations this fall.</p> <p>Weather forecasters have issued red flag warnings, the highest alert level for wildfire danger, due to intense weather conditions and the elevated risk of blazes sparking.</p>

“Our primary goal in engaging prescribed fires and wildfires is to ensure the safety of the communities involved. Our employees who are engaging in prescribed fire operations are part of these communities across the nation,” Moore said in a statement. “The communities we serve, and our employees deserve the very best tools and science supporting them as we continue to navigate toward reducing the risk of severe wildfires in the future.”

The US Forest Service has been facing much criticism for the prescribed fire in New Mexico that escaped its containment lines in April and joined with another blaze to form what is now [the largest fire](#) in the state’s history.

Moore said that in 99.84% of cases, prescribed fires go as planned and they remain a valuable tool for reducing the threat of extreme fires by removing dead and downed trees and other fuel from overgrown forests.

Wildfires have broken out this spring earlier than usual across multiple states in the western US, where climate change and an enduring drought are fanning the frequency and intensity of forest and grassland fires. The nation is far outpacing the 10-year average for the number of square miles burned so far this year.

Nationally, more than 5,700 wildland firefighters were battling 16 uncontained large fires that had charred over a half-million acres (2,025 sq km) of dry forest and grassland, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

The largest fire currently burning in the US has blackened more than [300,000 acres](#) and state officials have said they expect the number of homes and other structures that have burned to rise to more than 1,000 as more assessments are done.

In [Texas](#), the Texas A&M forestry service said the fire that has burned more than two dozen structures and forced the temporary evacuation of the historic town of Buffalo Gap was about 25% contained on Friday after charring more than 9,600 acres of juniper and mesquite brush.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Historically high temps dozens of states</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/21/us-heatwave-temperatures-hot-weather-us-states">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/21/us-heatwave-temperatures-hot-weather-us-states</a>
GIST	<p>Dozens of states across the US began the weekend grappling with historically high spring temperatures, as a blistering heatwave that has scorched the country’s south and west moves east.</p> <p>The early arrival of sweltering weather, before what’s expected to be another hot, dry summer, is forecast to break or tie roughly 130 heat records for this time of year, with temperatures between <a href="#">20F and 30F above average</a> in the mid-Atlantic and north-east.</p> <p>But a dip in the jet stream will maintain much cooler than normal temperatures for the Rockies into the Plains. The National Weather Service predicts in Colorado it may “look and feel like a return to winter,” though the cold blast won’t be enough to douse raging wildfires farther west.</p> <p>More than 120 million Americans are in the crosshairs of the heat, raising fears of health risks for the most vulnerable, outdoor workers and those who do not have access to indoor cooling. The National Weather Service <a href="#">issued a special statement cautioning residents</a> to remain vigilant for signs of heat illness, take breaks inside when possible, and stay hydrated.</p> <p>“It is a little early so everything might not quite be where it would be if we were in the middle of summer,” said Marc Chenard, a meteorologist with the National Weather’s Service’s Weather Prediction. “It is really these first couple events when everyone is getting used to it and just understanding what they need to do.”</p>

Large swaths of the east are expected to break records for heat, including in Washington, forecast to hit 96F (35.5C) on Saturday, and in Boston, which could get up to 93F (34C).

A half-marathon held Saturday in Brooklyn vividly illustrated the brutality of the conditions. One runner collapsed and died, and six others were brought to the hospital, as authorities warned that hot temperatures and high humidity could trigger heat illness, [the Associated Press](#) reported, citing local officials.

In Baltimore, Maryland, where the 147th [Preakness Stakes](#) is set to run at 7pm, forecasted temperature at the start of the prestigious horse race is 91F, slightly below the high of 94F and a full 18 degrees above normal.

Already, Texas has been pummeled by the heat, which delivered Dallas's hottest May in history, and the south-west has cooked as strong winds fanned wildfire risks throughout the drought-stricken region.

On Thursday, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center said nearly the entire continental US would experience [above average temperatures](#) this summer. La Niña conditions favored those conditions through the northern hemisphere's summer, into the fall and early winter, with increased rain in the north-west, the center said this month.

A regulating authority that oversees the health of the nation's electrical infrastructure, NERC, warned that the extreme temperatures and ongoing drought could cause the power grid to buckle across vast areas of the country this summer, potentially leading to electricity shortages and blackouts.

The body, formally called the [North American Electric Reliability Council](#), said in its 2022 Summer Reliability Assessment that high temperatures would cause the demand for electricity to rise while drought conditions would reduce the amount of power available to meet demand.

"Persistent, extreme drought and its accompanying weather patterns, however, are out of the ordinary and tend to create extra stresses on electricity supply and demand," NERC's Mark Olson said.

Parts of Europe, too, are experiencing mid-summer heat a month before spring officially turns to summer. In southern Spain, high temperatures pushed close to 104F in Andalusia.

"This episode is very unusual for mid-May and could be one of the most intense episodes in the last 20 years," panish weather official Ruben del Campo said.

Heat is a silent killer, often [responsible for more deaths](#) than higher-profile disasters like floods, hurricanes or tornadoes. And the rising toll heat has been taking is expected to worsen as the world warms because of the climate crisis.

Frequent, intensifying heatwaves result from the climate crisis, with models indicating that there could be between 25 and 30 extreme events a year by mid-century – up from an [average of between four and six a year historically](#). They are also expected to cover wider swaths of land than before.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Ukraine signals readiness for new talks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/21/zelenskiy-signals-readiness-for-new-talks-if-mariupol-troops-are-not-harmed">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/21/zelenskiy-signals-readiness-for-new-talks-if-mariupol-troops-are-not-harmed</a>
GIST	<p>Ukraine has suggested that it is willing to resume talks with Russia as Moscow claimed to have taken full control of the besieged city of Mariupol – its biggest prize since it <a href="#">invaded Ukraine in February</a>.</p> <p>Speaking to a television channel on Saturday, Ukraine's president, <a href="#">Volodymyr Zelenskiy</a>, said that "discussions between Ukraine and Russia will undoubtedly take place".</p>

“Under what format I don’t know – with intermediaries, without them, in a broader group, at the presidential level,” he added. “But the war will be bloody, there will be fighting and [it] will only definitively end through diplomacy.

“There are things that can only be reached at the negotiating table. We want everything to return [to as it was before] but [Russia](#) does not want that.”

The Kremlin’s spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, responded by blaming [Ukraine](#) for stopping the talks. The last discussions between the two sides took place on 22 April, according to Russian news agencies.

During the interview, held with a Ukrainian broadcaster, Zelenskiy spoke of creating a document enshrining security guarantees for his country. Although bilateral discussions would be held with Russia, the document would be signed by “friends and partners of Ukraine, without Moscow”, he added.

However, he warned that the precondition for resuming negotiations was that Moscow did not kill Ukrainian troops who [had been defending the Azovstal steelworks](#) in Mariupol. “The most important thing for me is to save the maximum number of people and soldiers,” he said.

Last week, Russia announced it had taken full control of Mariupol, the first major city to fall. The last group of Ukrainian soldiers holed up in the Azovstal steelworks surrendered on Friday, bringing to an end a months-long siege of the defenders’ last stronghold.

“Underground structures of Azovstal where militants were hiding are now under full control of Russian armed forces,” Russia’s defence ministry said in a statement, adding that 2,439 Ukrainian fighters had surrendered.

Hours before the Russian announcement, Zelenskiy said the defenders had been told by commanders that they should leave. In a live video posted on the messaging service Telegram, Denys Prokopenko, commander of the Azov Regiment, which has led the defence of the factory, said only the dead remained.

“The higher military command has given the order to save the lives of the soldiers of our garrison and to stop defending the city,” he said. “I now hope that soon the families and all of Ukraine will be able to bury their fighters with honours.”

Ukraine hopes to exchange the surrendering Azovstal soldiers for Russian prisoners. But in Donetsk, pro-Kremlin authorities are threatening to put some of them on trial.

The fall of Mariupol – the largest trading port on the Sea of Azov, from which Ukraine exports grain, iron, steel and heavy machinery – is a breakthrough for Russia. Taking control of the city means gaining a land corridor from the Donbas to Crimea.

Fierce fighting continued in the eastern Donbas, where Zelenskiy said Russian troops had “completely ruined” the cities of Rubizhne and Volnovakha, “just as they did Mariupol”, adding that the Russians were “trying to do the same with Severodonetsk and many other cities”.

Meanwhile, on Saturday the Russian energy company Gazprom halted gas exports to neighbouring Finland, the Finnish gas system operator said, after Helsinki angered Moscow by applying for Nato membership last week.

Moscow had warned Finland that any such application would be “a grave mistake with far-reaching consequences”.

The majority of gas used in Finland comes from Russia, but the fuel only accounts for about 5% of the country’s annual energy consumption.



	The Finnish president, Sauli Niinistö, said he and the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had had “open and direct” talks to discuss the bid for Nato membership, after Erdoğan openly questioned whether Finland and Sweden, which has also applied, should be permitted to join.
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Day 88 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-88-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-88-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ukraine has suggested it is willing to resume talks with Russia</b> as Moscow claimed to have taken full control of the besieged city of <b>Mariupol</b>. Speaking to a television channel on Saturday, <a href="#">Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelenskiy</a> said that “discussions between Ukraine and Russia will undoubtedly take place”. “Under what format I don’t know ... but the war will be bloody, there will be fighting and [it] will only definitively end through diplomacy.” The Kremlin’s spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, responded by blaming <a href="#">Ukraine</a> for stopping the talks. The last discussions between the two sides took place on 22 April, according to Russian news agencies.</li> <li>• <b>Russia is considering giving up Ukraine fighters captured in Mariupol for <a href="#">Viktor Medvedchuk</a></b>, a detained ally of Russian president Vladimir Putin. “We are going to study the possibility,” said Leonid Slutsky, a senior member of Russia’s negotiating team on Ukraine, speaking from the separatist city of Donetsk in south-eastern Ukraine, the RIA Novosti news agency reported.</li> <li>• <b>Russia banned 963 Americans, including president Joe Biden, from entering the country.</b> The list also includes the secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the CIA chief, William Burns.</li> <li>• <b>Biden signed a funding bill</b> that will provide nearly \$40bn (£32bn) in aid to <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Zelenskiy met Portugal’s prime minister</b>, António Costa, and described the meeting as “important and meaningful”. Portugal later announced an agreement to provide €250m (\$264m) in financial aid to <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</li> <li>• The <b>Ukraine president also had a phone conversation with Italy’s prime minister</b>, Mario Draghi, and says he stressed the importance of more sanctions on <a href="#">Russia</a> and unblocking Ukrainian ports.</li> <li>• <b>Russia destroyed a Ukrainian special-operations base near Odesa</b>, Ukraine’s main Black Sea port, as well as a significant cache of western-supplied weapons in northern <b>Zhytomyr</b> region, Russia defence ministry spokesperson Igor Konashenkov said on Saturday. There was no confirmation from the Ukrainian side.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine ruled out a ceasefire or concessions to Moscow.</b> Zelenskiy adviser <b>Mykhailo Podolyak</b> said Kyiv would not accept any deal with Russia that involved ceding territory. He said making concessions would backfire on Ukraine because Russia would hit back harder after any break in fighting. “The war will not stop [after concessions]. It will just be put on pause for some time,” Podolyak, Ukraine’s lead negotiator, told Reuters on Saturday. “They’ll start a new offensive, even more bloody and large-scale.”</li> <li>• <b>Turkish president Tayyip Erdogan</b>, who has objected to <b>Sweden and Finland joining Nato</b>, <b>held phone calls with the leaders</b> of the two countries on Saturday and discussed his concerns about terrorist organisations. Turkey surprised its Nato allies last week by objecting to the two countries’ accession to the military alliance, but western leaders have expressed confidence that Ankara’s objections will not be a roadblock for the membership process.</li> <li>• <b>Russia’s state gas company, Gazprom, <a href="#">halted gas exports to Finland</a></b>, which refused Moscow’s demands to pay in roubles for Russian gas after western countries imposed sanctions over the invasion.</li> <li>• <b>Canada has imposed sanctions on the Russian-born billionaire and newspaper proprietor Alexander Lebedev.</b> The former KGB agent is the owner of UK newspapers the Evening Standard and the Independent.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Ukraine preps possible attack from Belarus</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/ukraine-forces-prepare-for-possible-attack-on-belarusian-border">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/ukraine-forces-prepare-for-possible-attack-on-belarusian-border</a>
GIST	<p>Ukrainian forces have built a new line of defences along the country's previously unfortified northern border with <a href="#">Belarus</a> amid signs of another attack.</p> <p>Russian forces invaded <a href="#">Ukraine</a> through the Belarusian border in February when they tried to capture the capital, Kyiv.</p> <p>On 10 May, Belarus's army chief, Viktor Gulevich, announced the deployment of Belarusian special forces and equipment in response to what he described as a "southern threat" from Ukraine and Nato. Belarus has been conducting military drills its border with Ukraine since early May.</p> <p>Belarusian President, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has been Russia's closest ally in its war in Ukraine. On Tuesday, Lukashenko urged the Russian-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, which met in Moscow, to remain united on Ukraine and accused the west of prolonging the conflict.</p> <p>The Guardian was given access to Ukraine's border positions on the condition that it did not disclose the exact locations or the surnames of the Ukrainians serving.</p> <p>In the forests along the Belarusian border, a Ukrainian territorial defence unit made up of fighters between the ages of 19 and the mid-60s, is manning a network of trenches and positions constructed since the February invasion.</p> <p>Before February, much of Ukraine's border with Belarus consisted of small kiosk-like checkpoints which Russian tanks broke through with ease. Two days after the invasion, Ukraine closed all its border crossings with Belarus and Russia.</p> <p>In their analysis of the threat from Belarus, the UK's Ministry of Defence said last week that the presence of Belarusian forces on the border would probably prevent Ukraine from deploying support operations on its Donbas front.</p> <p>Armed with AK47s and a few dozen men per position, the fighters hope the Belarusian border will not be used by invading forces again.</p> <p>"We'll be in the frying pan," joked Vova, a man who volunteered to fight in the Donbas in 2014 and was in the Soviet army. Vova signed up to fight alongside his brother, Ihor, and his brother's son, Maksym, on the second day of the war.</p> <p>"They took the first 500 men in the queue that day, but there were over 800 of us," said Ihor, sat between his brother and son at the makeshift barracks near the border.</p> <p>"I've got hypertension, he's got hypertension, he's on insulin," said Ihor, pointing around the room at the middle-aged and pension-aged men. "And then the other part of the unit is younger guys like Maksym."</p> <p>Ihor and Maksym were working on a construction site in Kyiv on the morning of the invasion. They rushed back to the Zhytomyr region, where their family live, to sign up. Territorial defence units in Ukraine are made up of people who fight in the same region as where they live.</p> <p>The men and a few women in the unit said some of them knew each other from before the war. In almost every other case, there is only a few degrees of separation.</p> <p>"In some cases, it was like, 'Oh, your grandmother knows my grandfather, maybe we're brothers'," said Ihor, who added that fighting among people from his own region gave him a great sense of duty and motivation.</p>

	<p>The unit said they do not have the back up of heavy artillery units, but that they were fortunate to have local geography on their side. The miles-long narrow roads that lead down from the border are surrounded by thick forests which cover the deep, swampy ground.</p> <p>“No one has ever managed to hold this territory for that reason,” said Ihor, the unit’s military press secretary, speaking about battles around the northern border during the second world war.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Recall: Jif peanut butter</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/certain-jif-peanut-butter-varieties-recalled/507-32570058-6b51-40d9-b078-c50fb22f899a">https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/certain-jif-peanut-butter-varieties-recalled/507-32570058-6b51-40d9-b078-c50fb22f899a</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Do you have a jar of Jif peanut butter in your pantry? Double check the label; it might be involved in a new recall.</p> <p>On Saturday, J.M. Smucker issued a voluntary recall for over 40 varieties of Jif products due to potential salmonella contamination. <a href="#">According to the Food and Drug Administration</a>, the recalled peanut butter was distributed nationwide in retail stores and other outlets.</p> <p>The recall follows a multistate salmonella outbreak, which <a href="#">the FDA said</a> is linked to some Jif peanut butter products from the J.M. Smucker facility in Lexington, Kentucky. A total of 14 people in 12 states reported illnesses, and two of them were hospitalized.</p> <p>The FDA said illnesses connected to the outbreak were reported in Georgia, Texas, Arkansas, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, North Carolina, New York, South Carolina, Virginia and Washington. The latest illness was reported on May 1.</p> <p>"Epidemiologic evidence indicates that Jif brand peanut butter produced in the J.M. Smucker Company facility located in Lexington, KY, is the likely cause of illnesses in this outbreak," the FDA said. It and the CDC are still investigating.</p> <p><b>Which products were recalled?</b></p> <p>Recalled products include the products below with lot codes 1274425 – 2140425, all with the first seven digits ending with 425. Lot codes are next to the "best if used by" date on the product's packaging.</p> <p>The products have a two-year shelf life, so the FDA said you should check any Jif peanut butter in your home.</p> <p>The following varieties are included in the recall. <a href="#">Double check with this table from the FDA</a> to see if your purchased peanut butter has been recalled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER</li> <li>• 16 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER</li> <li>• 96 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TWIN PACK</li> <li>• 96 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER TWIN PACK</li> <li>• 40 OUNCE NATURAL CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER</li> <li>• 12 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER INTERNATIONAL</li> <li>• 3/4 OUNCE PEANUT BUTTER PLASTIC CASE</li> <li>• .64 OUNCE NATURAL PEANUT BUTTER PLASTIC CASE</li> <li>• 96 COUNT NATURAL PEANUT BUTTER TO GO CASE</li> <li>• 36 COUNT CREAMY PEANUT TO GO CASE</li> <li>• 8 COUNT CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER TO GO</li> <li>• 8 COUNT CREAMY PBTR TO GO</li> <li>• 4.5 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TO GO</li> <li>• 54 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TO GO 36 PACK</li> <li>• 28 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER</li> <li>• 96 COUNT CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TO GO</li> </ul>

- 54 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TO GO 36 PACK
- 28 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 40 OUNCE NATURAL HONEY
- 12 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 12 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TO GO
- 40 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 28 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 4 POUND CAN CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 96 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY TWINPACK
- 15.5 OUNCE NO ADDED SUGAR PEANUT BUTTER
- 13 OUNCE SQUEEZABLE POUCH
- 13 OUNCE SQUEEZABLE POUCH
- 13 OUNCE NATURAL SQUEEZE POUCH
- 13 OUNCE NATURAL SQUEEZE POUCH
- 80 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TWIN PACK
- 80 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER TWIN PACK
- 40 OUNCE REDUCED FAT CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 16 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 16 OZ REDUCED FAT CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 16 OUNCE CREAMY OMEGA 3 PEANUT BUTTER
- 16 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER
- 80 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TWIN PACK
- 16 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 16 OUNCE NATURAL CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER
- 16 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER HONEY
- 40 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
- 40 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER
- TO GO 8 PACK 250 GRAM CREAMY
- 46.5 OUNCE NO ADDED SUGAR PEANUT BUTTER
- 1.1 OUNCE PORTION CONTROL PEANUT BUTTER 120 COUNT
- 96 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER TWIN PACK
- 28 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER

According to J.M. Smucker and the FDA, customers who identify one of these products should not consume the product and instead dispose of it immediately. The FDA also said customers should wash and sanitize any utensils or surfaces that might have touched the recalled peanut butter.

Consumers who have questions or would like to report adverse reactions should visit [Jif's website](#) or call 800-828-9980 Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM ET.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Expert: world 10-week supply of wheat</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/world-wheat-supply-food-shortage-un-security-council-sara-menker">https://www.q13fox.com/news/world-wheat-supply-food-shortage-un-security-council-sara-menker</a>
GIST	<p><b>NEW YORK</b> - Global food insecurity has reached levels not seen since the financial crisis of 2008, and it's only going to get worse without aggressive intervention, a food insecurity expert told the <a href="#">United Nations</a> Security Council this week.</p> <p><a href="#">Russia's invasion of Ukraine</a> "did not start a food security crisis," but it did add "fuel to a fire that was long burning," said Sara Menker, CEO of Gro Intelligence, a global company that uses artificial intelligence and public and private data to predict food supply trends.</p> <p>"This isn't cyclical. This is seismic," Menker said <a href="#">during a special meeting of the UN Security Council</a>. "Even if the war were to end tomorrow, our food security problem isn't going away anytime soon without concerted action."</p>

Before the Russia-Ukraine conflict began, the two countries supplied a combined one third of the world's wheat exports and were in the top five exporters of corn. Coupled with widespread fertilizer shortages, [supply chain issues](#) and [record droughts](#), the world has about 10 weeks worth of wheat on hand, Menker said.

"Without aggressive global actions, we stand the risk of an extraordinary amount of human suffering and economic damage," Menker said.

### **War threatens global food supply**

Russia claims the [10,000-plus sanctions](#) the country is facing for its aggression toward Ukraine have disrupted routes, impeded Russian vessels from delivering goods and restricted commercial transactions because of banking difficulties.

U.S. Secretary of State [Antony Blinken](#) said those claims are false.

"The decision to weaponize food is Moscow's and Moscow's alone," Blinken said. "Sanctions aren't blocking Black Sea ports, trapping ships filled with food, and destroying Ukrainian roads and railways; Russia is. Sanctions are not emptying Ukrainian grain silos and stealing Ukrainian farm equipment; Russia is."

Blinken said [sanctions imposed by the U.S.](#) and many others aren't preventing Russia from exporting food and fertilizers because they exempt exports of food, fertilizer and seeds. "And we're working with countries every day to ensure that they understand that sanctions do not prevent the flow of these items," he said.

U.N. food chief David Beasley warned the Security Council that the war in Ukraine has created "an unprecedented crisis" of escalating food prices that are already sparking protests and riots and growing hunger. The crisis could add at least 47 million people to the 276 million "marching to starvation" before Russia's invasion of its smaller neighbor.

The executive director of the World Food Program said 49 million people in 43 countries are already "knocking on famine's door."

Beasley recalled that when food prices got out of control in 2007 and 2008 over 40 countries faced political unrest, riots and protests.

"We are already seeing riots and protesting taking place as we speak — Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Pakistan, Peru," he said. "We've seen destabilizing dynamics already in the Sahel from Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad. These are only signs of things to come."

Beasley urged world leaders to do everything possible "to bring the markets to stability because things will get worse."

### **What's causing global food insecurity?**

Menker said the global food crisis can be attributed to five factors "occurring simultaneously." Combined, they're creating "unprecedented" challenges that will impact the world's supply of food for several years.

- **Lack of fertilizer:** Fertilizer prices have nearly tripled over the past year — and quadrupled over the past two years — Menker said, thanks to supply chain issues, [restrictions on natural gas](#) and export restrictions amid the Russia-Ukraine war. The fertilizer shortage could significantly reduce crop yields for big suppliers like the United States, Brazil and western Europe later this year and into next year, "severely impacting global food security and inflation for three-to-five years at a minimum," Menker said.
- **Climate change:** Global [drought conditions](#) for wheat are the worst they've been in 20 years around the world, Menker said. "Major breadbaskets" like the U.S. and Brazil, the world's two largest exporters of agricultural product, are also experiencing extreme droughts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cooking oil shortage:</b> The price of palm oil has nearly tripled in the last two years, Menker said, and the world has lost 75% of sunflower oil exports to the war in Ukraine. China has also notably increased the amount of cooking oil it imports.</li> <li>• <b>Grain shortage:</b> Russia and Ukraine accounted for a third of the world's wheat exports before the conflict began. Now, the world is seeing record low grain levels on top of fertilizer shortages, supply chain issues and droughts.</li> <li>• <b>Supply chain/logistical bottlenecks:</b> Supply chain issues created by the pandemic have been exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war. "All Ukrainian ports remain closed, making it impossible to move any of Ukraine's harvested grain across its borders," Menker said. "Shifting to rail will move less than 10% of pre-war flow. It's not enough."</li> </ul> <p>"It's a once-in-a-generation occurrence that can dramatically reshape the geopolitical era," Menker said. "We cannot solve food insecurity on a national scale anywhere. While the next few years will likely be difficult, we can coordinate a global response."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 New Seattle 'no shelter, no sweep' policy?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/we-dont-do-sweeps-here-in-seattle-city-implements-no-shelter-no-sweep-policy">https://www.q13fox.com/news/we-dont-do-sweeps-here-in-seattle-city-implements-no-shelter-no-sweep-policy</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - The decision makers in charge of the region's <a href="#">homelessness efforts</a> have tipped their hand to a new strategy regarding encampment removals - no shelter, no sweep.</p> <p>"We don't do sweeps here in <a href="#">Seattle</a>" Mayor Bruce Harrell said on Thursday, touting the successes of the recent <a href="#">camp removal at Woodland Park</a>.</p> <p>Those same decision makers avoiding using the term 'sweep' whenever possible, but it's a word the public understands. Shelter is another simple word the public can wrap their heads around.</p> <p>The new strategy - dictated by those same leaders - will be based on the availability of temporary housing for the people being removed.</p> <p>"We will let availability dictate the timeline," King County Regional Homeless Authority Marc Dones said at the same event. "We'll let bed availability dictate the speed at which we move rather than force a false outcome".</p> <p>The strategy puts pressure on the city and the KCRHA to have enough temporary housing like tiny house villages empty when an encampment is cleared.</p> <p>Harrell says 60 people received referrals to tiny house villages, 25 got referrals to enhanced shelters where people can stay more than 24 hours and four were relocated to "permanent housing alternatives." We don't know how many showed at the locations and accepted housing.</p> <p>Wanda had been living unsheltered in and round the park for three years and accepted an offer of housing.</p> <p>"It helped a lot, get pushed out the door, a boost for me" she said. "I'm not a bad person or any of these people are bad, you get stuck."</p> <p>Bruce Harrell made the removal of the encampment at Woodland Park a campaign promise, however, it took the city four months after Harrell took office for outreach workers get to a point where the camp, one of the largest in the city's recent history, was ready to be cleared.</p> <p>Despite criticism by park users and neighbors, Harrell and King County Regional Homelessness Authority CEO Marc Dones were in no rush.</p> <p>"We took our time to get to know people" Dones said.</p>



The new strategy is expected to be part of the Mayor's long anticipated plan for the city's homeless population, a plan his spokesperson says will be unveiled by the end of May.

Dones is also asking for KCRHA's sole funders, the City of Seattle and King County to nearly double its investment in 2023, despite the fact that 38 other cities the authority services have not invested any money into its operation.

"It's a hefty ask," Dones told a May 11th meeting of the KCRHA's Implementation board. The Governing board where six of its eleven members and elected officials are in the City of Seattle and King County government could approve the budget ask next week.

"I hope people don't come back" to the park, Wanda said. "I hope they offer up enough housing that gets people on their feet."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Accidental shootings among children spike</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/report-accidental-shootings-among-children-spiked-by-nearly-one-third-in-2020">https://www.q13fox.com/news/report-accidental-shootings-among-children-spiked-by-nearly-one-third-in-2020</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - Across the Puget Sound, incidents involving guns have increased, making guns safety top of mind. Alarming, statistics show more children are losing their lives due to gun violence.</p> <p>As a state, <a href="#">Washington</a> has the 39th highest rate of gun deaths in the U.S., according to <a href="#">Everytown</a>, a For Gun Safety organization.</p> <p>In fact, they say firearms are the leading cause of death in children and teens followed by poisoning, car accidents, cancer and suffocation.</p> <p>Professor of Pediatrics with UW Medicine Doctor Fred Rivara says Washington started the Firearm Tragedy Prevention Program following a growing issue – community gun violence – which persists today.</p> <p>"We're all concerned about the level of firearm violence in our community," Dr. Rivara said. "30% of children in the state of Washington live in homes with firearms."</p> <p>He says of the 30%, 20 to 30% of those children live in homes where firearms are not properly stored – meaning they're left unlocked.</p> <p>"It's really a matter of trying to keep firearms out of the hands of children," Rivara said.</p> <p>Nationally, 492 people unintentionally die by gun in an average year, according to Aftermath.</p> <p>As of February, of this year – 209 children under 17 years of age have died by gunshot and an additional 519 were hurt.</p> <p>In Washington, an average of 60 children and teens die by guns every year.</p> <p>Moms Demand Action says they're neither pro nor against guns but rather gun safety and firmly believe these incidents can be preventable.</p> <p>"They're 100% preventable," Shannon Mayo, a gun violence prevention lead with the organization said. "If you have firearms, you need to lock them up. You need to lock up your guns separate from your ammunition and under no circumstances should you let your kids know what that combination is."</p> <p>The organizations says the pandemic has also been a stressor for families.</p>



	<p>The uncertainty led to higher gun sales – a 70% increase in March 2020 compared to 2019.</p> <p>Accidental shootings among children spiked by nearly one-third between March to December 2020 compared to the same months in 2019.</p> <p>"The majority of the unintentional accidental shootings, like the one that happened down a Federal Way, are where kids get access to a gun that's in a household owned by a family member," Rivara said.</p> <p>While police have not made that determination in this case, Dr. Rivara says his concern is the family, the neighborhood and community following the tragedy.</p> <p>"These are life-changing events that happen, and I think with the increase in number of guns in homes, we really need to do whatever we can to make sure that these guns are out of the hands of children," Rivara said.</p> <p>So how can proper gun safety lower the number of incidents?</p> <p>If you keep your gun at home Aftermath suggests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treating the gun as though it's always loaded</li> <li>• Get a training course on how to handle a gun</li> <li>• Use the right ammunition</li> <li>• Never rely on the gun's safety to protect you</li> <li>• Lock guns safely</li> </ul> <p>Moms Demand Action is just one of the organizations pushing for legislation to promote effective state and local efforts to reduce preventable injuries and deaths from daily gun violence in Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Children mental health facilities strained</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/states-mental-health-facilities-for-children-are-strained">https://www.q13fox.com/news/states-mental-health-facilities-for-children-are-strained</a>
GIST	<p>Washington's four intensive inpatient facilities that serve youth with severe mental health issues are strained, according to the <a href="#">Associated Press</a>.</p> <p>On the <a href="#">website for Tamarack Center</a>, big bold letters read "DOES IT WORK?"</p> <p>"We answer that question with an enthusiastic 'Yes'," the center says of its offerings: a children's residential program in <a href="#">Spokane</a>, where kids with serious mental <a href="#">health</a> conditions live and receive intensive psychiatric treatment for months at a time.</p> <p>For the children and teens at Tamarack, the promise of something that "works" means everything.</p> <p>Tamarack is one of <a href="#">Washington's</a> four intensive inpatient facilities that serve as a veritable last stop for youth with mental health diagnoses so significant that they're unsafe living at home. Some youth have cycled in and out of emergency departments following a mental health crisis; others have bounced between foster homes, lived in juvenile detention or experienced lengthy and unsuccessful trials with outpatient care. Many have a history of aggressive behavior, mood disorders, suicidal behavior and trauma.</p> <p>At a moment when more children than ever are in need, Washington's pediatric inpatient psychiatric facilities are reeling from chronic underfunding, a patchwork of laws that make expansion difficult, and a mental health workforce crisis that's translated to high employee turnover and serious understaffing.</p> <p>Washington currently funds 94 long-term inpatient beds to serve the state's 1.1 million children. Even though the state has injected more funding to add additional long-term beds, providers say they're</p>

struggling even to keep their existing beds online because they can't retain or hire enough staff. And while the state is trying to set up a new inpatient facility, not a single provider has applied to run it.

Pearl Youth Residence, a 27-bed pediatric facility in Tacoma, had a 50% staff turnover rate last year, said Chris Gleason, chief communications and community affairs officer at Comprehensive Life Resources, which oversees Pearl Youth. Because it didn't have enough staff, Pearl Youth made the difficult decision in December to stop admitting new patients. Its census has since dropped to 17.

"Just trying to get a therapist?" to work at Pearl Youth, said Kymm Dozal, who is the facility's director. "I'm calling them unicorns now."

As Washington faces a burgeoning youth mental health crisis, places like Pearl Youth and Tamarack have become a central focus of debate over how to expand care for children experiencing serious mental illnesses or behavioral problems. On one front sit families who are fighting — through lawsuits or sheer determination — to piece together intensive outpatient services so their children can stay at home. On another are families who have gone through a long odyssey of diagnoses and outpatient services and see no other option but housing their children in long-term, inpatient psychiatric care.

Many families begin seeking out long-term care as they watch their child's symptoms become progressively worse, even violent, at home. More and more, though, children are in such a serious crisis that they're taken to an emergency department — and end up stuck living there for weeks or months as they wait to secure a long-term stay at facilities like Tamarack and Pearl Youth.

Hundreds of Washington children end up in this holding pattern, called "boarding," each year, The Seattle Times recently reported.

Waits for a long-term bed are lengthier than at any time in recent memory: Of those on the state's waitlist during the first quarter of 2022, children ages 6-13 waited an average of 144 days, and those ages 14-18 waited 96 days. And the number of admissions is historically high, a reflection of both the crushing need for long-term care and faster turnover at care facilities, experts say. Tamarack, for instance, admitted 47 children in 2021, its highest admittance ever. But kids are staying for shorter periods: The average is now 4.5 months, down from a typical stay of about 6 months.

"Our phone rings all day," said Tim Davis, who has run Tamarack Center for 34 years.

"Out of 10 phone calls from parents or folks to put a kid here we say no to probably nine. The phone just rings constantly for people wanting to get their kids some help."

To serve children with serious mental illnesses, Washington state contracts with three nonprofit residential facilities: Tamarack, Pearl Youth, and a small facility in Yakima called Two Rivers Landing. The state runs a fourth facility, called the Child Study and Treatment Center, near Western State Hospital in Lakewood.

Washington began funding long-term pediatric psychiatric beds, now called the Children's Long-term Inpatient Program (CLIP), in the 1980s. Davis said the state envisioned small, homelike facilities staffed by highly qualified physicians, nurses and teachers.

Tamarack largely fits that model. Teens who live there have school for five hours most days and spend the rest of their time in group therapy, individual therapy, family therapy and a mix of recreational activities like basketball, pool or video games.

Jason Longshore, who oversees the nursing department at Tamarack and has worked there 26 years, said the biggest change he's noticed over the course of his career is the length of time residents live at the center. In his early years at Tamarack, kids would stay an average of 10-12 months, he said, and "by the time they left here they were in pretty good shape."

Now, "there's been so many kids waiting to get in, whether it's from home or hospital, that there's a push, like 'We have people in line here, let's get going,'" he said.

There's also a financial incentive to get kids out of hospitals and into long-term care: The daily cost of boarding in an ER can top \$2,000, depending on the hospital. The rate the state pays for long-term care at Tamarack is less than half that, at \$880 per day.

Some who manage CLIP facilities say that's not enough money to recruit and retain the highly trained staff needed for this work — especially when they have to compete for staffing with hospitals, which can often pay more, and jobs that offer work-from-home or more flexible working environments. And CLIP facility operators say the state's rate for long-term care doesn't cover the cost of caring for many high-needs youth.

Davis remembers only three meaningful increases to the state's rate over the past 30 years, and the current rate doesn't leave room for facilities to scale up, he said. As part of the decades-long shift away from institutionalization, cultural and legal forces have focused on improving access to outpatient care rather than extended inpatient stays.

Tamarack has stayed afloat because it accepts children with public or private insurance, Davis said. Private plans tend to pay a little more than the state.

"The state is not happy with us at all because we say no to some of the CLIP kids they refer. I certainly understand their position on that," Davis said, but, "It's kept us from hitting the iceberg."

But several other residential facilities have closed or consolidated.

Seattle Children's Home, which was founded in 1884 and served youth before Washington was formally a state, merged with a provider called Navos in 2012. Then, Navos shuttered some of its programs: Citing staffing shortages and costs of care that outpaced the state's rate of reimbursement, Navos' Sunstone program closed in summer 2021. Several therapeutic group homes such as Ryther in Seattle and Navos Ruth Dykeman Children's Center in Burien, which offered less intensive services than CLIP, have also closed or shrunk their residential rehabilitation programs.

Long-term care is just one part of a splintered system that makes it difficult for kids to get back to stable homes, or from one point in the mental health system to the next. From foster care to hospitals to therapeutic group homes, long waiting times have created bottlenecks at nearly every stop. For instance, CLIP operators say sometimes they struggle to discharge youths into less intensive mental health settings because these services are full, leaving kids in a CLIP bed that's needed by another youth waiting in a hospital or at home.

For instance, a 15-year-old at Pearl Youth who met all his treatment goals and had been stable for five months was supposed to leave the facility in early May. But his guardians said they weren't prepared to pick him up, Dozal said. So Pearl Youth kept him for two additional weeks — and asked the state's Department of Children, Youth and Families to look for other options, like foster care or a group home. But by last Monday — the teen's new discharge date — nothing had panned out.

Pearl Youth couldn't hold the teen, and the facility also wouldn't release him into homelessness, so Dozal made every call she could think of: DCYF, law enforcement, child protective services. On that Monday afternoon, she decided to drive the boy to DCYF's doorstep.

"We get stuck in this situation where all of this progress the kid has made is essentially wiped out," Dozal said. "It was really hard for staff to even wrap their head around that we are dropping a kid off and essentially walking away."

In early May, eight Washington children ages 11 and younger, and 28 ages 12 and up were waiting for a CLIP bed, state data shows.

To help speed more children and teenagers toward care, Washington State Health Care Authority, which oversees the CLIP program, recently landed funding for a new 12-bed facility and at least 35 additional beds, officials said.

But problems persist.

In January, the agency solicited bids for the new 12-bed residential facility, which is intended to serve youth with co-occurring mental health conditions and developmental or intellectual disabilities — a population with complex needs that's often denied placement at existing CLIP facilities.

The state put up the funding to pay staff salaries and other costs that go into caring for a child, but no capital dollars to construct or renovate a facility. No one bid on the project.

"We were really hopeful we would get a bite," said Diana Cockrell, a behavioral health administrator at the Health Care Authority.

Davis and Pearl Youth's Dozal weren't interested: Chronic staffing concerns at their facilities make it hard to imagine trying to staff new beds. And Washington is uniquely hard-pressed to attract new long-term inpatient providers, Davis added. This is because Washington youth 13 and up have the right to both initiate their own mental health treatment and withdraw from it without their parents' consent. The law offers youth important protections, but also makes long-term care a precarious business proposition.

"There are lots of places for kids with varying degrees of psychiatric illness and many of them are profitable," Davis said. "With that being said, they stay away from Washington as fast as they can because kids can sign themselves out," of care.

Teenagers can be held involuntarily if a judge gets involved: At Pearl Youth and Tamarack, anywhere from 30-45% of residents are there under a court order, the facility administrators said. However, youth often buy into their treatment as it progresses, Davis said, and end up staying voluntarily.

Davis said he stays the course because, like Tamarack advertises on its website, long-term treatment can work.

"It's kind of like a slot machine. You can sit there and play all night and lose, but every now and then if you hit the jackpot you feel like a million dollars," he said. "We'll help a kid and they'll do so well and get amazingly better here ... you look around and say, 'Well, OK, we've got to keep doing this.'"

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HEADLINE	05/21 Rate Covid cases rising; 'highest risk' level
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/rate-of-covid-cases-in-wa-is-rising/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/rate-of-covid-cases-in-wa-is-rising/</a>
GIST	<p>The rate of COVID-19 cases is rising in Washington.</p> <p>The statewide average of cases over the past seven days is 228 per 100,000 people, keeping Washington in the state Department of Health's highest-risk category for the spread of COVID-19, The Spokesman-Review said Saturday.</p> <p>Epidemiological curves show the number is still climbing, the newspaper reported.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday the best projections from health officials show there is likely to be a plateau in the relatively near future.</p> <p>The most recent statewide data, complete through the week of May 11, shows the average percent in the last week of hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients is still at one of its lowest points in the pandemic, at about 6%. But it is increasing. At its peak in January, that number was almost 32%.</p>

	<p>Inslee on Friday issued updated guidance for vaccine requirements for state employees, lifting the requirement for outdoor volunteers and contractors whose work does not involve delivery of health care services. Those can include landscapers, wildland firefighters and construction workers.</p> <p>The vaccine requirement for all other state employees remains in effect, and Inslee on Wednesday said he would not be lifting it anytime soon.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 'One Seattle Day of Service' 4000 volunteers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/with-closed-toe-shoes-4000-volunteers-clean-up-in-one-seattle-day-of-service/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/with-closed-toe-shoes-4000-volunteers-clean-up-in-one-seattle-day-of-service/</a>
GIST	<p>In recent years it's been tough times for the Seattle psyche. So it's understandable why on Saturday some 4,000 volunteers were ready for a little feel-good.</p> <p>They had signed up for Mayor Bruce Harrell's One Seattle Day of Service, which meant sprucing up the city, from picking up litter to painting over graffiti and pulling up weeds from street medians.</p> <p>That's what Seahawks coach Pete Carroll and his wife, Glena Carroll, were doing in the morning along First Avenue in Pioneer Square. Pulling up weeds.</p> <p>Earlier, speaking to over 200 volunteers who had gathered at Occidental Park to kick off the day, the coach told them, "This is a great community, there's no doubt."</p> <p>Carroll was making an apparent reference to the bad rap Seattle has gotten — Fox News in 2020 labeled the city "<a href="#">Crazy Town</a>"; KOMO's "<a href="#">Seattle Is Dying</a>" 2019 documentary has gotten over 12 million views.</p> <p>He said, "When we hear the national news talk about Seattle, they don't understand, they don't know."</p> <p>The cleanups were spaced across 127 sites.</p> <p>At Occidental Park, Marc Taylor was among the crew filling plastic garbage bags.</p> <p>"A lot of cigarette butts, alcohol containers, those things people wear around their wrists when going to a nightclub, one needle," he said.</p> <p>For some locations, instructions to volunteers included, "Wear sturdy closed-toe shoes."</p> <p>Taylor is director of finance at Chief Seattle Club, a human-services agency in Pioneer Square.</p> <p>"I'm very proud to be a Seattleite," he said. "It's gotten better with a new mayor."</p> <p>For the volunteers at Occidental Park, there were "One Seattle" T-shirts, work gloves, orange safety vests, sun hats. They posed for a panoramic group photo before starting out.</p> <p>Besides the feel-good part, the volunteers also could apply for up to three hours of community service, worth \$50 toward a parking, camera or noncriminal traffic ticket.</p> <p>The event was a concerted effort by some 150 groups, including big players such as the Mariners, Sounders, Kraken, Storm and UW football as well as Starbucks and Amazon and numerous small enterprises. Harrell's office said that material costs to the city for the event came to about \$80,000.</p> <p>In the park, scattered around, were a dozen people, some mildly curious about the goings-on, some ignoring it all.</p>

Among them was Nickolas Brandon, who said he had been homeless off and on for 20 years, and usually sleeps outdoors. “Cleaning up here? That’s good,” he said. Brandon’s main concern was when a food kitchen across the park would start serving.

It was an enthusiastic group, in some cases guided by city crews.

Gary Hren, a landscape supervisor with the city’s transportation department, worked ahead of volunteers pulling weeds on a median strip.

He was pulling up wild chervil, which kind of resembles carrot or parsley plants, but is classified as noxious, causing skin rashes. Hren didn’t want the volunteers handling that.

He said he appreciated the volunteers.

City crews have to cover 130 acres of landscape, he said, and his department has only 14 people.

Among those pulling up weeds was Tracie Reid, property accountant for Steinhauer Properties, whose Seattle holdings include the Embassy Suites and Stadium Innovation Center.

She grew up in Federal Way and now lives in Edmonds. She frequents Seattle, she said. Friday night, Reid was with her daughter at the Wings Over Washington “flying theater” and the Wing Dome eatery on the waterfront.

“Homelessness, and the pandemic,” she said about the last couple of years.

Now, she said about Seattle, “It seems to be moving in the right direction.”

It seems to always feel like that in this town, when the sun finally comes out.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Seattle traffic deaths show no sign slowing
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/seattle-traffic-deaths-show-no-sign-of-slowng-as-second-bicyclist-fatally-struck-this-year/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/seattle-traffic-deaths-show-no-sign-of-slowng-as-second-bicyclist-fatally-struck-this-year/</a>
GIST	<p>Gan Hao Li rode his bike every day, sometimes two or three times. And every day on his way out the door, he’d smile and wave to Marena Ostbo, the manager of Hirabayashi Place in Seattle’s Chinatown International District. Wednesday, May 10, was no different.</p> <p>“He stopped, smiled, said, ‘Good morning, enjoy the sunshine,’ and left,” Ostbo said.</p> <p>Except this time, Li, 73, didn’t return. He was killed around 10:30 that morning in Sodo, when a Jeep driver pulled out of a parking lot on Fourth Avenue South and South Holgate Street and hit him, according to the Seattle Police Department. Li died of his injuries later that day. Police are still investigating.</p> <p>“I’ve never met somebody who was as genuinely kind as he was,” Ostbo said. “Seeing his wife over the last few days, I can only imagine. I can only imagine.”</p> <p>Ten people have been killed on Seattle’s roads in 2022, according to the Seattle Department of Transportation, outpacing the number of deaths at this time last year and the year before. At least 59 people have been seriously injured.</p> <p>Although fewer people die on Seattle’s streets than Portland’s or Austin’s, for example, the trends of the last two years have yet to reverse themselves in 2022 and Seattle’s “Vision Zero” goal of no fatalities on the roads remains maddeningly out of reach. Despite recent efforts, the combination of speed, larger vehicles and infrastructure that’s unfriendly to people outside of cars has meant deaths continue to rise.</p>

“It’s really frustrating and devastating,” said Allison Schwartz, SDOT’s Vision Zero coordinator. “And that’s just for someone who reads the collision reports and is trying to make a dent in this issue with my team and with others in the department, you know? It’s hard to think about what the people closest to those who’ve been killed or hurt are going through.”

On the heels of one of the worst years for traffic deaths in Seattle — and across the country — four pedestrians have been killed so far this year and Li is the second bicyclist. The first, Antonio Tiongco, was also hit on Holgate, just a block away on Third Avenue South.

That the two bicyclist deaths occurred in the city’s main industrial district is no coincidence, said Clara Cantor, community organizer for Seattle Neighborhood Greenways. Since at least 2004, more serious injuries and deaths have occurred there than in any other Seattle neighborhood, despite having fewer total collisions than downtown.

“It’s like every single year there are people that are dying in Sodo because of how unsafe the streets are,” Cantor said. “Because it’s such an intense freight corridor, very little has been done there to improve safety for people walking and biking.”

SDOT counted an average 925 riders per weekday through the industrial district in 2020. As a busy stretch for commuters, especially since the West Seattle Bridge’s closure, and with a sizable homeless population, the mingling of pedestrians, bicyclists and large vehicles is ever-present.

“One of the primary issues is speed,” Schwartz said. She pointed to the area’s long blocks, wide streets, large vehicles and minimal crossings or protected bike lanes.

Several projects are planned for the neighborhood to improve safety. East Marginal Way was recently promised \$20 million from the federal government to finish building a two-way protected bike lane between South Atlantic and South Spokane streets, in addition to other upgrades to the area. Construction is to begin later this year.

The city also has promised a continuous bike lane from Georgetown to downtown along either Airport Way South or Sixth Avenue South, although the project’s progress was stalled in 2020.

But Seattle City Councilmember Tammy Morales, whose district includes the city’s industrial district, as well as another deadly stretch, Rainier Avenue South, said she’s growing frustrated with talk about improvements and wants more action.

“It just feels like it is clear that there are some roads in the city that are more dangerous, there are some parts of the city that have been underinvested in and we have to be serious about keeping Seattleites safe, and I don’t think we are demonstrating any serious commitment to that,” she said. She called for a council hearing on traffic deaths, which transportation chair and Councilmember Alex Pedersen has agreed to this summer.

#### **“My favorite resident”**

Orbst, the manager of Hirabayashi Place, isn’t supposed to have favorite residents. But of Li, she said, “he was my favorite resident.” When she took the job last year, he was the first to welcome her. A Chinese immigrant, Li spoke little English, but the intention behind his waves and gestures was clear enough.

“You can truly feel the sadness in the building since he passed,” she said. “It really is a tragedy.”

Linda Vonheim, the building’s manager until late last year, moved the Lis into the building when it first opened in 2017. She, too, called them her favorites. On his way out the door for his daily rides or evening walks with his wife, he’d greet Vonheim with a hearty, “Hello, manager!”

“He was just a great man, one of the pillars of our community at Hirabayashi,” she said. “If you needed help he would be right there. He would never say no to anybody.”



Crystal Ng, who lives in Hirabayashi Place, said Li and his wife were the only two people to use their building's rooftop deck, doing exercises and playing pingpong together nearly every day. Ng speaks Chinese and would often help them communicate with other residents in the building.

"He always asked me if I'd had dinner yet and tell me that he hadn't seen me for a long time," she said.

Ng didn't hear the news of Li's death right away, but started to suspect something was wrong. She didn't see his bike in storage. While watching the evening news, she saw an image of a "crunched" bicycle and realized she recognized it.

"I had a gut feeling," she said.

"He and his wife were just enjoying their retirement, growing old together," Vonheim said through tears, "and now that's been taken away from her."

### **A wake-up call**

It's not just bikers and pedestrians who want to see safer conditions in Sodo, said Erin Goodman, executive director of the Sodo Business Improvement Area. The people driving trucks through there certainly don't want to kill anyone, she said.

Goodman supports completion of the Sodo bike lane near Fifth Avenue South in order to distinguish between routes for bikers and routes for drivers.

"Do I think that people need to be able to bike through Sodo? Yes," she said. "On every street? No. There need to be safe corridors."

"This accident is a little bit of a wake-up call that this area's transportation system needs some attention," she added.

The lack of such infrastructure is, on the one hand, the result of Sodo's role as a freight-heavy neighborhood, said Cantor. But it's also indicative of underinvestment in South Seattle more broadly, hewing closely to redlined areas of the past.

"Sodo and the entirety of southeast Seattle have really suffered a lot due to racism and people writing off that South Seattle needs to be safe to walk and bike and live in," she said.

Morales echoed that point, saying that meeting the goals of zero fatalities will mean a much larger investment in capital projects.

"We have to fundamentally change how we think about transportation in this city if we want to meet our Vision Zero goals," she said.

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## **Cyber Awareness**

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HEADLINE	05/21 Faster ransomware detection
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220521-faster-ransomware-detection">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220521-faster-ransomware-detection</a>
GIST	Engineering researchers have developed a new approach for implementing ransomware detection techniques, allowing them to detect a broad range of ransomware far more quickly than previous systems.  Ransomware is a type of malware. When a system is infiltrated by ransomware, the ransomware encrypts that system's data – making the data inaccessible to users. The people responsible for the ransomware then

extort the affected system's operators, demanding money from the users in exchange for granting them access to their own data.

Ransomware extortion is hugely expensive, and [instances of ransomware extortion are on the rise](#). The FBI reports receiving [3,729 ransomware complaints in 2021](#), with costs of more than \$49 million. What's more, 649 of those complaints were from organizations classified as critical infrastructure.

"Computing systems already make use of a variety of security tools that monitor incoming traffic to detect potential malware and prevent it from compromising the system," says Paul Franzon, co-author of a paper on the new ransomware detection approach. "However, the big challenge here is detecting ransomware quickly enough to prevent it from getting a foothold in the system. Because as soon as ransomware enters the system, it begins encrypting files." Franzon is Cirrus Logic Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at [North Carolina State University](#).

"There's a machine-learning algorithm called XGBoost that is very good at detecting ransomware," says Archit Gajjar, first author of the paper and a Ph.D. student at NC State. "However, when systems run XGBoost as software through a CPU or GPU, it's very slow. And attempts to incorporate XGBoost into hardware systems have been hampered by a lack of flexibility – they focus on very specific challenges, and that specificity makes it difficult or impossible for them to monitor for the full array of ransomware attacks.

"We've developed a hardware-based approach that allows XGBoost to monitor for a wide range of ransomware attacks, but is much faster than any of the software approaches," Gajjar says.

The new approach is called FAXID, and in proof-of-concept testing, the researchers found it was just as accurate as software-based approaches at detecting ransomware. The big difference was speed. FAXID was up to 65.8 times faster than software running XGBoost on a CPU and up to 5.3 times faster than software running XGBoost on a GPU.

"Another advantage of FAXID is that it allows us to run problems in parallel," Gajjar says. "You could devote all of the dedicated security hardware's resources to ransomware detection, and detect ransomware more quickly. But you could also allocate the security hardware's computing power to separate problems. For example, you could devote a certain percentage of the hardware to ransomware detection and another percentage of the hardware to another challenge – such as fraud detection."

"Our work on FAXID was funded by the Center for Advanced Electronics through Machine Learning (CAEML), which is a public-private partnership," Franzon says. "The technology is already being made available to members of the center, and we know of at least one company that is making plans to implement it in their systems."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Russia govt. procured powerful botnet</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/russia-botnet-fronton-social-media-nisos/">https://therecord.media/russia-botnet-fronton-social-media-nisos/</a>
GIST	<p>A subcontractor for Russia's Federal Security Service is accused of creating a powerful botnet that had the ability to not only launch damaging DDoS attacks but also manipulate trending topics on social media platforms, according to cybersecurity firm Nisos.</p> <p>In <a href="#">a report released this week</a>, the company explained that it analyzed documents, images and a video stolen from Oday Technologies, a Russian government contractor that <a href="#">was attacked by a hacktivist group named "Digital Revolution"</a> in March 2020.</p> <p>While initial media reports on the documents obtained by the hacktivists' focused on how the botnet — named Fronton — could be used to "turn off the Internet in a small country," a deeper analysis showed that it was primarily developed "for coordinated inauthentic behavior on a massive scale," Nisos said.</p>

The company said the system included a dashboard named SANA that allowed users to “formulate and deploy trending social media events en masse” by creating fictitious social media accounts.

“The system creates these events that it refers to as Инфоповоды, ‘newsbreaks,’ utilizing the botnet as a geographically distributed transport. SANA provides for the creation of social media persona accounts, including email and phone number provisioning. In addition, the system provides facilities for creating these newsbreaks on a schedule or reactive basis,” Nisos explained.

The report explains in detail Oday Technologies’ ties to the Russian government and criminal underground groups, including [infamous hackers like Pavel Sitnikov](#), who has connections to the [hacking group known as APT28](#) or Fancy Bear, and [was arrested by Russian officials in 2021](#).

“We assess that he likely has extensive knowledge of the functionality of the Fronton infrastructure and SANA front-end systems,” Nisos said.

At the time of the initial hack in 2020, the documents revealed that in 2017 and 2018, the Russian government was interested in building a large IoT botnet similar to Mirai. The specs laid out a plan to create a botnet out of a web of compromised internet security cameras and digital recorders.

But in the documents obtained by Nisos, the researchers say the “primary purpose” of Fronton “is not to create Denial of Service attacks, but to lay groundwork for massively scalable coordinated inauthentic behavior.”

The botnet “consists of a layer of compromised IoT devices that communicate with front-end server infrastructure. These servers then pass their data over VPNs or the TOR network to back-end servers,” Nisos explained. “While the system could not exist without this groundwork, it is not the focal point of the Fronton network. This base layer is then utilized by the SANA platform in order to coordinate inauthentic behavior and propagate disinformation at a global scale.”

Digital Revolution even released a video showing how SANA would work. The platform is customizable based on whether it is used for social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter or blogs, media sites, forums and other websites.

“It also allows an operator to configure how many likes, comments, and reactions a bot account should create, as well as how often it should create photos and interact with groups on a weekly basis. An operator can also specify a numeric range of the number of friends a bot should maintain,” the Nisos researchers noted.

The documents show the tool was used throughout 2018 and that it was mostly centered around the “newsbreak” feature – which allowed users to create media attention and buzz around any topic of interest.

SANA provided users with tools to select a group of botnet users with which to react positively, negatively or indifferently using one of the predefined reaction models.

Twitter and Facebook did not respond to requests for comment.

### **Management of likes, comments and reposts**

The tool allowed users to program the weekly frequency of likes, comments, and reposts while also providing a list of response patterns that could be used.

Users could even set the minimum frequency of actions and well as the intervals between actions. Oday Technologies created a machine learning system that could be turned on and off related to behavioral trends on social media.

	<p>“Groups are auto-generated sets of accounts created by the system that are organized by platform and country,” Nisos explained.</p> <p>“The operator can choose from a list of names and a dictionary of surnames. The operator can then select the SMS API platform to use in order to create a phone number to automatically respond to two-factor authentication requests and other platform text requests.”</p> <p>In recent years, several social media companies have begun releasing reports on inauthentic behavior, highlighting the global prevalence of fake accounts used for a range of political purposes.</p> <p>Last month, Facebook parent company Meta <a href="#">released an Adversarial Threat Report</a> that found a network based in Saint Petersburg, Russia that targeted Nigeria, Cameroon, Gambia, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with news critical of France’s influence across the African continent.</p> <p>Meta said it was able to tie the activity to the notorious Russian Internet Research Agency, an organization well-known for its role <a href="#">in interfering in the US presidential election in 2016</a>.</p> <p>The Meta report also highlighted a range of bot activity, espionage and coordinated attacks on Facebook and Instagram in a number of countries, including Azerbaijan, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Philippines, El Salvador and Iran.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Exposed: 380,000 Kubernetes API servers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://threatpost.com/380k-kubernetes-api-servers-exposed-to-public-internet/179679/">https://threatpost.com/380k-kubernetes-api-servers-exposed-to-public-internet/179679/</a>
GIST	<p>More than 380,000 Kubernetes API servers allow some kind of access to the public internet, making the popular open-source container-orchestration engine for managing cloud deployments an easy target and broad attack surface for threat actors, researchers have found.</p> <p>The Shadowserver Foundation discovered the access when it scanned the internet for Kubernetes API servers, of which there are more than 450,000, according to <a href="#">a blog post</a> published this week.</p> <p>“ShadowServer is conducting daily scans of the IPv4 space on ports 443 and 6443, looking for IP addresses that respond with an ‘HTTP 200 OK status,’ which indicates that the request has succeeded,” according to the post.</p> <p>Of the more than 450,000 Kubernetes API instances <a href="#">identified by Shadowserver</a>, 381,645 responded with “200 OK,” researchers said. In all, Shadowserver found 454,729 Kubernetes API servers. The “open” API instances thus constitute nearly 84 percent of all instances that that Shadowserver scanned.</p> <p>Moreover, most of the accessible Kubernetes servers—201,348, or nearly 53 percent—were found in the United States, according to the post.</p> <p>While this response to the scan does not mean these servers are fully open or vulnerable to attacks, it does create a scenario in which the servers have an “unnecessarily exposed attack surface,” according to the post.</p> <p>“This level of access was likely not intended,” researchers observed. The exposure also allows for information leakage on version and builds, they added.</p> <p><b>Cloud Under Attack</b></p> <p>The findings are troubling given that attackers already increasingly have been targeting <a href="#">Kubernetes cloud clusters</a> as well as <a href="#">using them</a> to launch other attacks against cloud services. Indeed, the cloud historically has suffered from <a href="#">rampant misconfiguration</a> that continues to <a href="#">plague deployments</a>, with Kubernetes being no exception.</p>

In fact, Erfan Shadabi, cybersecurity expert with data-security firm [comforte AG](#), said in an email to Threatpost that he was not surprised that the Shadowserver scan turned up so many Kubernetes servers exposed to the public internet.

“White [Kubernetes] provides massive benefits to enterprises for agile app delivery, there are a few characteristics that make it an ideal attack target for exploitation,” he said. “For instance, as a result of having many containers, Kubernetes has a large attack surface that could be exploited if not pre-emptively secured.”

### Open-Source Security Exposed

The findings also raise the perennial issue of how to build security into open-source systems that become ubiquitous as part of modern internet and cloud-based infrastructure, making an attack on them an attack on the myriad systems to which they are connected.

This issue was highlighted all-too-unfortunately in the case of the Log4Shell vulnerability in the ubiquitous Java logging library Apache Log4j that was [discovered last December](#).

The flaw, which is easily exploitable and can allow unauthenticated remote code execution (RCE) and complete server takeover—continues to be targeted by attackers. In fact, a recent report finding millions of Java applications [still vulnerable](#) despite a patch being available for Log4Shell.

An Achilles heel in particular of Kubernetes is that the data-security capabilities built into the platform are only at a “bare minimum”—protecting data at rest and data in motion, Shadabi said. In a cloud environment, this is a dangerous prospect.

“There’s no persistent protection of data itself, for example using industry accepted techniques like field-level tokenization,” he observed. “So if an ecosystem is compromised, it’s only a matter of time before the sensitive data being processed by it succumbs to a more insidious attack.”

Shadabi’s advice to organizations that use containers and Kubernetes in their production environments is to take securing Kubernetes as seriously as they do all aspects of their IT infrastructure, he said.

For its part, Shadowserver recommended that if administrators find that a Kubernetes instance in their environment is accessible to the internet, they should consider implementing authorization for access or block at the firewall level to reduce the exposed attack surface.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Pro-Russia hackers hit Italy govt. sites
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/pro-russian-hackers-italy/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/pro-russian-hackers-italy/</a>
GIST	<p>Pro-Russian hackers have targeted the websites of various Italian institutions and government ministries, law enforcement said on Friday.</p> <p>The attack, which began on Thursday evening and was still in progress as of Friday early afternoon, was reportedly confirmed by Italy’s Postal Police.</p> <p>The attack was launched at around 20:00 GMT on Thursday by the hacker group "Killnet," Italian cyber-security group Yarix said in a statement.</p> <p>Among the approximately 50 institutions reportedly hit are Italy’s superior council of the judiciary, its customs agency and its foreign affairs, education and cultural heritage ministries.</p> <p>On Friday, shortly before 12pm GMT, Italy’s embassy in London tweeted that the websites of the country’s foreign ministry and all its embassies had been hit and were currently inoperable...</p>

	<p>“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and consular applications at this location have been affected by a cyber attack,” the tweet read.</p> <p>“We apologize to users for inconveniences and delays in the processing of paperwork.”</p> <p>Killnet also <a href="#">launched attacks</a> in early May targeting Italy’s upper house of parliament, the National Health Institute (ISS) and the Automobile Club d’Italia.</p> <p>In April, cybersecurity agencies in the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand <a href="#">issued a warning</a> to organizations beyond Ukraine’s borders that they may soon be targeted by pro-Russian hackers.</p> <p>The so-called “Five Eyes” intelligence group published its most detailed threat assessment on April 21, including information on Kremlin-backed units and cybercrime groups that have pledged to support Russia.</p> <p>The report claimed that the cybercrime groups that could threaten Western critical infrastructure (CNI) organizations include data leak extortionists the CoomingProject, DDoS-ers Killnet, Emotet operators Mummy and Sality botnet developer Salty Spider.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 Anonymous: cyber-war pro-Russia Killnet</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/anonymous-declares-war-on-killnet/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/anonymous-declares-war-on-killnet/</a>
GIST	<p>Hacktivist group Anonymous has announced on social media that it’s launching a cyber-war against the pro-Russian group Killnet, which recently <a href="#">attacked</a> European institutions.</p> <p>The news comes after anonymous hackers recently declared “cyber war” against Vladimir Putin’s government following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including <a href="#">leaking</a> over 360,000 Russian federal agency files in the process.</p> <p>On Twitter, the @YourAnonOne account announced that: “The <a href="#">#Anonymous</a> collective is officially in cyber war against the pro-Russian hacker group #Killnet.”</p> <p>Last week, Killnet attacked the websites of various Italian institutions and government ministries, including the superior council of the judiciary, its customs agency and its foreign affairs, education and cultural heritage ministries.</p> <p>On May 16, it was <a href="#">reported</a> that Killnet also launched attacks in early May targeting Italy’s upper house of parliament, the National Health Institute (ISS) and the Automobile Club d’Italia.</p> <p>Shortly after taking to Twitter and declaring cyber-war, Anonymous published a new message announcing that the official Killnet site was taken offline.</p> <p>The news comes a few days after cybersecurity agencies in the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand <a href="#">issued</a> a warning to organizations beyond Ukraine’s borders that they may soon be targeted by pro-Russian hackers.</p> <p>The so-called “Five Eyes” intelligence group <a href="#">published</a> its most detailed threat assessment yesterday, including information on Kremlin-backed units and cybercrime groups that have pledged to support Russia.</p> <p>The report claimed that the cybercrime groups that could threaten Western critical national infrastructure (CNI) organizations include data leak extortionists the CoomingProject, DDoS-ers Killnet, Emotet operators Mummy and Sality botnet developer Salty Spider.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Fake Windows 11 downloads
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hackread.com/beware-fake-windows-11-download-vidar-malware/">https://www.hackread.com/beware-fake-windows-11-download-vidar-malware/</a>
GIST	<p>Phishing domains are spreading Windows 11 installers loaded with Vidar infostealer.</p> <p>According to the cybersecurity firm <a href="#">Zscaler ThreatLabz</a>, threat actors are trying to install info stealing malware on users' devices through newly registered domains. Zscaler explained that these spoofed domains were first observed in April 2022 and created to distribute "malicious ISO files" (a PE32 binary) disguised as legit MS Windows 11 OS installers.</p> <p>These malicious files deliver Vidar infostealer on the device. Some of the fake domains registered on 20 April include ms-win11com, win11-servcom, win11installcom, and ms-teams-appnet.</p> <p>It is worth noting that Vidar malware was previously used in <a href="#">attacks against YouTubers</a> and <a href="#">in a VPN scam</a> in which a fake VPN website was discovered delivering password-stealing malware.</p> <p><b>What is Vidar malware?</b></p> <p>It is notorious info stealing malware that can perform spying on users. Its primary job is to steal sensitive user data such as operating system information, online accounts credentials, browser history, financial or banking data, and cryptocurrency wallet login details. It is generally distributed via the Fallout exploit kit.</p> <p><b>How is Vidar Infostealer Distributed?</b></p> <p>Vidar malware is delivered through phishing and attacker-controlled social media networks. ZScaler researchers noted that the Vidar malware variants extract the C2 configuration from these social media channels on the Mastodon network and Telegram.</p> <p>In two cases examined by Zscaler, attackers created new user accounts and saved C2 server addresses in the profile section on Mastodon and Telegram channels. The same C2 was stored in the Channel Description tab. This helps attackers implant malware on vulnerable devices as these catch C2 configuration from the channels.</p> <p>According to Zscaler's <a href="#">blog post</a>, those behind this campaign leverage backdoored versions of legitimate software like Adobe Photoshop and Microsoft Teams to distribute Vidar malware. Though the fake sites appear to be the central download portal, it is the ISO file that does the damage as it hides the malware payload and Themida.</p> <p>This ISO file contains an unusually large-sized executable (more than 300MB) to avoid detection from anti-viruses. This file is signed with an expired certificate from Avast, and all binaries have been signed by a certificate featuring the same serial number.</p> <p>Researchers believe that the certificate could be a part of the leaked data when Avast was <a href="#">targeted</a> in October 2019. The ISO files, pretending to be Win 11 installers, also have a GitHub repository that stores the backdoored versions of Adobe Photoshop and other software.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Predator spyware infected Android devices
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/google-predator-spyware-infected-android-devices-using-zero-days/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/google-predator-spyware-infected-android-devices-using-zero-days/</a>
GIST	<p>Google's Threat Analysis Group (TAG) says that state-backed threat actors used five zero-day vulnerabilities to install Predator spyware developed by commercial surveillance developer Cytrox.</p> <p>In these attacks, part of three campaigns that started between August and October 2021, the attackers used zero-day exploits targeting Chrome and the Android OS to install Predator spyware implants on fully up-to-date Android devices.</p>



"We assess with high confidence that these exploits were packaged by a single commercial surveillance company, Cytrox, and sold to different government-backed actors who used them in at least the three campaigns discussed below," said Google TAG members Clement Lecigne and Christian Resell.

The government-backed malicious actors who purchased and used these exploits to infect Android targets with spyware are from Egypt, Armenia, Greece, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Serbia, Spain, and Indonesia, according to Google's analysis.

These findings align with a report on Cytrox mercenary spyware [published by CitizenLab in December 2021](#), when its researchers discovered the malicious tool on the phone of exiled Egyptian politician Ayman Nour.

Nour's phone was also infected with NSO Group's Pegasus spyware, with the two tools being operated by two different government clients per CitizenLab's assessment.

### **Zero-days exploited in three campaigns targeting Android users**

The five previously unknown 0-day security vulnerabilities used in these campaigns include:

- [CVE-2021-37973](#), [CVE-2021-37976](#), [CVE-2021-38000](#), [CVE-2021-38003](#) in Chrome
- [CVE-2021-1048](#) in Android

The threat actors deployed exploits targeting these zero-days in three separate campaigns:

- Campaign #1 - redirecting to SBrowser from Chrome (CVE-2021-38000)
- Campaign #2 - Chrome sandbox escape (CVE-2021-37973, CVE-2021-37976)
- Campaign #3 - Full Android 0-day exploit chain (CVE-2021-38003, CVE-2021-1048)

"All three campaigns delivered one-time links mimicking URL shortener services to the targeted Android users via email. The campaigns were limited — in each case, we assess the number of targets was in the tens of users," [the Google TAG analysts added](#).

"Once clicked, the link redirected the target to an attacker-owned domain that delivered the exploits before redirecting the browser to a legitimate website. If the link was not active, the user was redirected directly to a legitimate website."

This attack technique was also used against journalists and other Google users who were alerted that they were the target of [government-backed attacks](#).

### **Spyware implant dropped using Android banking trojan**

In these campaigns, the attackers first installed the [Android Alien banking trojan](#) with RAT functionality used to load the Predator Android implant, allowing recording audio, adding CA certificates, and hiding apps.

This report is a follow-up to a July 2021 analysis of four other 0-day flaws discovered in 2021 in Chrome, Internet Explorer, and WebKit (Safari).

As Google TAG researchers revealed, Russian-backed government hackers linked to the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) exploited the Safari zero-day [to target iOS devices belonging to government officials](#) from western European countries.

"TAG is actively tracking more than 30 vendors with varying levels of sophistication and public exposure selling exploits or surveillance capabilities to government-backed actors," Google TAG added on Thursday.

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HEADLINE	05/22 PDF smuggles Word.doc to drop malware
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/pdf-smuggles-microsoft-word-doc-to-drop-snake-keylogger-malware/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/pdf-smuggles-microsoft-word-doc-to-drop-snake-keylogger-malware/</a>

<p><b>GIST</b></p>	<p>Threat analysts have discovered a recent malware distribution campaign using PDF attachments to smuggle malicious Word documents that infect users with malware.</p> <p>The choice of PDFs is unusual, as most malicious emails today arrive with DOCX or XLS attachments laced with malware-loading macro code.</p> <p>However, as people become more educated about opening malicious Microsoft Office attachments, threat actors switch to other methods to deploy malicious macros and evade detection.</p> <p>In a new report by <a href="#">HP Wolf Security</a>, researchers illustrate how PDFs are being used as a transport for documents with malicious macros that download and install information-stealing malware on victim's machines.</p> <p><b>Embedding Word in PDFs</b></p> <p>In a campaign seen by HP Wolf Security, the PDF arriving via email is named "Remittance Invoice," and our guess is that the email body contains vague promises of payment to the recipient.</p> <p>When the PDF is opened, Adobe Reader prompts the user to open a DOCX file contained inside, which is already unusual and might confuse the victim.</p> <p>Because the threat actors named the embedded document "has been verified," the Open File prompt below states, "The file 'has been verified.'" This message could trick recipients into believing that Adobe verified the file as legitimate and that the file is safe to open.</p> <p>While malware analysts can inspect embedded files in PDFs using parsers and scripts, regular users who receive these tricky emails wouldn't go that far or even know where to start.</p> <p>As such, many may open the DOCX in Microsoft Word, and if macros are enabled, will download an RTF (rich text format) file from a remote resource and open it.</p> <p><b>Exploiting old RCE</b></p> <p>The RTF document is named "f_document_shp.doc" and contains malformed OLE objects, likely to evade analysis. After some targeted reconstruction, HP's analysts found that it attempts to abuse an old Microsoft Equation Editor vulnerability to run arbitrary code.</p> <p>The deployed shellcode exploits CVE-2017-11882, a remote code execution bug in Equation Editor <a href="#">fixed in November 2017</a> but still available for exploitation in the wild.</p> <p>That flaw immediately <a href="#">caught the attention of hackers</a> when it was disclosed, while the slow patching that followed resulted in it becoming one of the <a href="#">most exploited vulnerabilities</a> in 2018.</p> <p>By exploiting CVE-2017-11882, the shellcode in the RTF downloads and runs Snake Keylogger, a modular info-stealer with powerful persistence, defense evasion, credential access, data harvesting, and data exfiltration capabilities.</p> <p><a href="#">Return to Top</a></p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/22 Elon Musk deep fakes promote crypto scam</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/elon-musk-deep-fakes-promote-new-cryptocurrency-scam/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/elon-musk-deep-fakes-promote-new-cryptocurrency-scam/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Cryptocurrency scammers are using deep fake videos of Elon Musk and other prominent cryptocurrency advocates to promote a BitVex trading platform scam that steals deposited currency.</p> <p>This fake BitVex cryptocurrency trading platform claims to be owned by Elon Musk, who created the site to allow everyone to earn up to 30% returns on their crypto deposits.</p>

This scam campaign started earlier this month with threat actors creating or hacking existing YouTube accounts to host deep fake videos of Elon Musk, Cathie Wood, Brad Garlinghouse, Michael Saylor, and Charles Hoskinson.

These videos are legitimate interviews modified with deep fake technology to use the person's voice in a script provided by the threat actors.

An example of one of the scam videos can be seen below, where Elon promotes the new scam site and says he invested \$50 million into the platform.

However, if you look carefully, you will see that the deep fake synchronizes the person's talking to the threat actor's script, which is so silly as to be comical.

### **How do we know this is a scam?**

While it is obvious that the interviews have been altered to simulate Elon Musk's voice to promote the BitVex trading platform, numerous other clues show that this is a scam.

Many YouTube channels promoting this trading platform have been hacked to suddenly show YouTube videos or YouTube Shorts that promote the BitVex trading site.

For example, a YouTube channel that displayed gaming videos in Arabic suddenly began showing a series of YouTube Shorts that promoted the BitVex scam. In addition, BleepingComputer has found dozens of other YouTube channels hijacked similarly to promote this scam.

Once you visit the BitVex trading site itself, it becomes more apparent that this is a scam.

For example, the site claims that Elon Musk is the CEO of the trading platform and contains endorsements from Ark Invest's Cathie Wood and Binance CEO Changpeng Zhao.

To use the BitVex platform, users must register an account at [bitvex\[.\]org](https://bitvex[.]org) or [bitvex\[.\]net](https://bitvex[.]net) to access the investment platform.

Once you log in, the site will display a dashboard where you can deposit various cryptocurrencies, select an investment plan, or withdraw your earnings.

Like almost all cryptocurrency scams, the dashboard will display recent withdrawals of various cryptocurrencies to make the site appear legitimate...

However, these withdrawals are created through JavaScript, randomly selecting one of five different cryptocurrencies (Cardano, Ethereum, Bitcoin, Ripple, or Binance Coin) and randomly generating withdrawal amounts. These fake withdrawals are changed randomly on each page refresh.

Thankfully, the scam does not appear too successful, with only \$1,700 deposits to the scam's cryptocurrency addresses seen by BleepingComputer. However, these addresses are likely rotated, so they could have stolen more since the scam launched.

Some of the cryptocurrency addresses used in this scam are listed below:

- **Bitcoin** - 16Ge7LhzpxHTSQLptSe4sptseVwDYU6gpN (Earned \$1,280.82)
- **Bitcoin Cash** - qpkrguy6ralp0pux390fr7pz2ugpq90s3uach9m42j
- **Ethereum** - 0x1087d3584AB80df8d14B4D7d5A2091C3Bb55eF2F
- **Tether** - TRh8zMBdcEEZdPBC6xkBmkd5SrpkRQejWK
- **Dogecoin** - DDU1kVvtd9bc4jQ1uY7EUBBddmzTgjsav
- **Polkadot** - 16keizqPvkS3uQ4Cad9vPNoQhbstKNqJtTG1Uk8i6mY8JNTL

While it may be hard to believe that people would fall for these scams, fake cryptocurrency giveaways and investment schemes are known to generate millions of dollars for threat actors.

In January 2021, a fake Elon Musk crypto giveaway scam [earned \\$580k in just one week](#).

Even more recently, an Ark Invest-themed [scam promoted on YouTube stole \\$1.3 million](#) by just re-streaming an edited version of an old live panel discussion on cryptocurrency with Elon Musk, Jack Dorsey, and Cathie Wood of Ark Invest.

These scams have gotten so pervasive and profitable that the FTC released a report warning that [\\$80 million has been lost to cryptocurrency investment scams](#) since October 2020.

Therefore, it is essential to recognize that almost every crypto giveaway site is a scam, especially those allegedly from Elon Musk, Tesla, SpaceX, Ark Invest, and Gemini that promise massive returns.

If you see emails, tweets, videos, or other messages on social media promoting these types of giveaways, remember that any cryptocurrency you send will not produce anything in return.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Chicago public schools suffers data breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-attack-exposes-data-of-500-000-chicago-students/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-attack-exposes-data-of-500-000-chicago-students/</a>
GIST	<p>The Chicago Public Schools has suffered a massive data breach that exposed the data of almost 500,000 students and 60,000 employee after their vendor, Battelle for Kids, suffered a ransomware attack in December.</p> <p>Ohio-based Battelle for Kids is a not-for-profit educational organization that analyzes student data shared by public school systems to design instructional models and evaluate teacher performance.</p> <p>Battelle for Kid <a href="#">says they work</a> with 267 school systems, and its programs have reached over 2.8 million students.</p> <p><b>Massive data breach for Chicago Public Schools</b></p> <p>Yesterday, the Chicago Public School (CPS) district disclosed that a December 1st ransomware attack on Battelle for Kids exposed the stored data of 495,448 students and 56,138 employees in its school system.</p> <p>According to a CPS, the school system partners with Battelle for Kids to upload student course information and assessment data for teacher evaluations.</p> <p>CPS says that the data stored on Battelle for Kids' servers was for school years 2015 through 2019 and exposed students' personal information and assessment scores.</p> <p>"Specifically, an unauthorized party gained access to your child's name, date of birth, gender, grade level, school, Chicago Public Schools student ID number, State Student ID number, information about the courses your student took, and scores from performance tasks used for teacher evaluations during school years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and/or 2018-2019," explains the CPS <a href="#">student data breach notification</a>.</p> <p>For staff, the threat actors potentially accessed their name, school, employee ID number, CPS email address, and Battelle for Kids username during school years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and/or 2018-2019.</p> <p>CPS says that no Social Security Numbers, home addresses, health data, or financial information was exposed in the attack.</p>

CPS is providing free credit monitoring, and identity theft protection to any students or staff members impacted. Instructions on how to access this free credit reporting can be found on the [CPS data breach page](#) created by the school system.

#### **Over four months to disclose breach**

In April, Ohio school districts began issuing [data breach notifications](#) warning students and staff that their data was exposed in the ransomware attack on Battelle for Kids.

Even though CPS' says their contract with Battelle for Kids requires immediate notification of a data breach, they first learned about the breach four months later, on April 26th, 2022.

However, it was not until May 11th that they first learned which specific students or staff had their data exposed.

"Our vendor, Battelle for Kids, informed us that the reason for the delayed notification to CPS was the length of time that it took for Battelle to verify the authenticity of the breach through an independent forensic analysis, and for law enforcement authorities to investigate the matter," explains CPS on their data breach page.

While it is not known what ransomware gang is behind this attack, all groups leave ransom notes behind on encrypted devices that include email addresses or links to ransom negotiation sites.

As part of the extortion process, ransomware gangs commonly provide proof that they stole data by sharing a list of all the stolen folders and sometimes sharing individual files as proof.

When a victim refuses to pay a ransom, the threat actors publicly disclose that they attacked the victim and begin leaking their stolen data.

There has been no public disclosure by a ransomware gang stating that they breached Battelle for Kids, possibly indicating that Battelle for Kids paid a ransom demand.

A similar but unrelated [data breach was disclosed](#) by the New York City Department of Education in March, where a vendor's cyber attack exposed the data of 820,000 students.

BleepingComputer has contacted Battelle for Kids with questions but has not heard back at this time.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Chatbot army latest DHL shipping phish</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities-threats/chatbot-army-deployed-dhl-shipping-phish">https://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities-threats/chatbot-army-deployed-dhl-shipping-phish</a>
GIST	<p>Phishing emails intended to look like a DHL communications are now coming loaded with a new twist — a version of a chatbot that helps drive targets to malicious links, according to a new report.</p> <p>That is to say, it behaves like a chatbot, but behind the scenes, the scripts are pre-programmed to respond with stock phrases based on a victim's answer, according to researchers at Trustwave who reported the <a href="#">phishing campaign</a> tactic. But the effect is the same — targets think they're talking to a live DHL representative.</p> <p>After clicking, the victim's browser opens a PDF file with another link asking the person to "Fix delivery," the Trustwave team reported. The chatbot will ask the victim to confirm a delivery address and tracking number, and it will even present a fake CAPTCHA to make everything seem legitimate. Eventually, the target will be asked to enter in login credentials and credit card information, which is promptly harvested.</p> <p>Because chatbots are widely used by brands to interact with customers online, end users aren't suspicious of interacting with them, the Trustwave team added — making this a perfect social-engineering ploy.</p>

	"This is what the perpetrators of this phishing campaign are trying to capitalize on," the <a href="#">chatbot phishing report</a> added. "Aside from spoofing the target brand on the phishing email and website, the chatbot-like component [is what] slowly lures the victim to the actual phishing pages."
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 YouTube removes Ukraine war channels</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/22/youtube-ukraine-invasion-russia-video-removals">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/22/youtube-ukraine-invasion-russia-video-removals</a>
GIST	<p>YouTube has taken down more than 70,000 videos and 9,000 channels related to the war in <a href="#">Ukraine</a> for violating content guidelines, including removal of videos that referred to the invasion as a “liberation mission”.</p> <p>The platform is hugely popular in Russia, where, unlike some of its US peers, it has not been shut down despite hosting content from opposition figures such as Alexei Navalny. <a href="#">YouTube</a> has also been able to operate in Russia despite cracking down on pro-Kremlin content that has broken guidelines including its major violent events policy, which prohibits denying or trivialising the invasion.</p> <p>Since the conflict began in February, YouTube has taken down channels including that of the pro-Kremlin journalist Vladimir Solovyov. Channels associated with Russia’s Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs have also been temporarily suspended from uploading videos in recent months for describing the war as a “liberation mission”.</p> <p>YouTube’s chief product officer, Neal Mohan, said: “We have a major violent events policy and that applies to things like denial of major violent events: everything from the Holocaust to Sandy Hook. And of course, what’s happening in <a href="#">Ukraine</a> is a major violent event. And so we’ve used that policy to take unprecedented action.”</p> <p>In an interview with the Guardian, Mohan added that YouTube’s news content on the conflict had received more than 40m views in Ukraine alone.</p> <p>“The first and probably most paramount responsibility is making sure that people who are looking for information about this event can get accurate, high-quality, credible information on YouTube,” he said. “The consumption of authoritative channels on our platform has grown significantly, of course in Ukraine, but also in countries surrounding Ukraine, Poland, and also within Russia itself.”</p> <p>YouTube did not provide a breakdown of the taken-down content and channels but Mohan said much of it represented Kremlin narratives about the invasion. “I don’t have the specific numbers, but you can imagine a lot of it being the narratives that are coming from Russian government, or Russian actors on behalf of the Russian government,” he said.</p> <p>YouTube has an estimated 90 million users in Russia, although it no longer allows advertising on the platform in the country. The decision by YouTube’s parent company, Google, has drawn protests from Navalny, who said well-targeted ads helped counteract Kremlin propaganda.</p> <p>“YouTube remains the largest video-sharing site up and running in Russia itself,” said Mohan. “So YouTube is a place where Russian citizens can get uncensored information about the war, including from many of the same authoritative channels that we all have access to outside of the country. We remain an important platform for Russian citizens themselves as this crisis continues to evolve.”</p> <p>Last week, the Russian minister for digital development, Maksut Shadaev, said the country would not block YouTube, despite disputes over content that have resulted in the platform being fined in court for not removing banned videos.</p> <p>Shadaev indicated that blocking Russia’s most popular social media platform would affect users. “We are not planning to close YouTube,” the minister said. “Above all, when we restrict something, we should clearly understand that our users won’t suffer.”</p>



	YouTube has also placed a worldwide ban on channels associated with Russian state media, including Russia Today and Sputnik. <a href="#">Facebook and Instagram are banned in Russia</a> and access to Twitter has been restricted, in response to the platforms' own bans on Russian state-owned media.
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HEADLINE	05/21 NFTs are put to new use in China
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/nfts-are-put-to-new-use-in-china-countering-censorship-during-pandemic-11653134403?mod=hp_list_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/nfts-are-put-to-new-use-in-china-countering-censorship-during-pandemic-11653134403?mod=hp_list_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>In most of the world, the <a href="#">market for NFTs is plummeting</a>. In China, nonfungible tokens are on the rise, not as digital-art investments but as a way to strike back at censorship.</p> <p>As Chinese internet censors have stepped up efforts to scrub content from social media during the pandemic, web users have increasingly turned to NFTs as a way to secure images, videos, audio and social-media posts on a blockchain to prevent their deletion.</p> <p>On April 22, a six-minute video clip called “Voices of April,” overlaid with what appeared to be a dozen audio recordings of conversations and cries for help from <a href="#">Shanghai residents</a>, briefly went viral on Chinese social media before censors deleted it.</p> <p>To prevent a piece of history from being erased, many internet users minted copies of the video into NFTs.</p> <p>All told, around 250 NFTS labeled as <i>siyuezhisheng</i>, for “Voices of April,” are now listed on OpenSea, one of the world’s largest NFT marketplaces. Many have no price tag or are priced very low, a sign they aren’t really intended for sale. One is listed for 404 ethereum, which on Friday was the equivalent of around \$800,000, in an apparent reference to the “not found” error message that can appear when content is removed.</p> <p>OpenSea also hosts NFTs of photos, videos, audio recordings and memes capturing the experiences of <a href="#">recent lockdowns in China</a>.</p> <p>“Our ordeal should be remembered,” said Dereck Yi, an in-house attorney at a Shanghai-based tech company who has minted dozens of NFTs related to the Shanghai lockdown, including a “Voices of April” copy. “There’s nothing we can do other than remember the hunger, anger, hopelessness and absurdity we have experienced.”</p> <p>Mr. Yi didn’t put a price tag on his NFTs, saying he wants to preserve memories. “Memories are not for sale,” he said.</p> <p>The use of NFTs is part of a broader move among Chinese internet users to circumvent censorship of sensitive information by preserving it on blockchains.</p> <p>A blockchain uses a distributed network of computers to agree on a record of information, which makes it exceedingly difficult for the record to be tampered with or destroyed. Blockchains are most commonly associated with bitcoin, though businesses, including in China, also use them for various kinds of record-keeping. With the exception of China, and, to a smaller extent, Russia, experts say they haven’t seen blockchains used to counter censorship.</p> <p>“In the West, when you talk to people about the technology, it’s quasitheoretical,” said Sam Williams, co-founder and chief executive of Arweave, a blockchain-based storage system. “But in China, it’s an immediately practical machine.”</p> <p>On the same day people were minting NFTs of the “Voices of April” video clip, many others raced to save it on Arweave. One application for doing so saw a 40-fold surge in traffic, said Mr. Williams.</p>



A traffic surge also occurred near the beginning of the pandemic, he said, after the death of Li Wenliang, a medical doctor who was reprimanded by authorities for early warnings about Covid-19. Dr. Li's [death from the virus](#) triggered an outpouring of emotion and frustration on Chinese social media for several hours before the posts were deleted.

There were several other efforts to protect Dr. Li's legacy, including a digital illustration of a tombstone on the ethereum blockchain, and an NFT project, led by Initium Media, an independent Chinese-language online publication, visualizing the more than 730,000 comments Chinese web users left on Dr. Li's account on the Weibo social-media platform after his death.

Content creators have turned to blockchains as well as a defense against censorship. One Chinese podcaster said her team is backing up podcasts on Arweave and working with app developers to make that easier to do for other Chinese podcasters. Arweave users in China are developing a plug-in that archives Weibo posts, Mr. Williams said.

Meanwhile, platforms for publishing content on blockchains have grown in popularity.

Guo Liu, the co-founder and chief technology officer of Matters.news, a blockchain-based Chinese-language publishing platform, said the website has amassed 100,000 writers since its founding in 2018, even though Matters.news, like OpenSea, is blocked in China. Users get around such obstacles in part by turning to virtual private networks, or VPNs.

Kin Ko, the founder of LikeCoin, a blockchain-based publishing platform that started in 2017, says some 8,000 websites now use its WordPress plug-in to preserve their content.

Among the roughly two million pieces of content stored are articles from Apple Daily, a pro-democracy newspaper in Hong Kong that the government shut down last year, after the passage of the [National Security Law](#).

"If you have an article, as long as you think it's important enough to be stored permanently as human history, you can do that," Mr. Ko said.

In Hong Kong, other efforts have sought to back up media and nonprofit archives on blockchains over the past two years, said one activist, though they have faced concerns over the political risks of leaving a record behind in an environment in which a large number of pro-democracy activists have been detained.

"Some people don't want their content stored permanently because they are already in danger," the activist said.

Preserving information on blockchains is costly, both financially and in terms of computer power. The expense is part of the reason NFTs have become a common tool for storing data-rich files such as images and videos.

Rather than storing an image or video file directly, an NFT in most cases simply stores the metadata on the blockchain, with a pointer to a traditional server where the file is actually held.

Blockchain experts warn, however, that while that has made blockchain storage more accessible, NFTs alone don't have the ability to protect content from being censored. If the original file is taken down from the traditional server for any reason, the NFT would still point to the file's original location but return a 404 error.

Fundamentally, the best way to prevent content from disappearing is to create "many copies of it around the world, so if someone wants to take it down, they'd have to go to all of the people hosting those copies," said Neha Narula, the director of the Digital Currency Initiative at the MIT Media Lab who studies cryptocurrencies and blockchain technologies.

Platforms such as Matter.news and LikeCoin get around this by using NFTs in conjunction with a suite of other technologies, such as Arweave and InterPlanetary File System, which help scatter and keep track of copies of pieces of content globally. The NFT would then point not to a single server but to many.

Mr. Liu of Matters.news said that ultimately, NFTs such as “Voices of April” serve more as a symbol. Most people in China remain unaware of them. He doesn’t see blockchain-based censorship-resistance tools as becoming mainstream in the near future, but believes the demand for them is likely to increase. “Many of us are exploring ways to push it forward,” he said.

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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/22 New militant group targets Turkish base?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.ipost.com/middle-east/article-707361">https://www.ipost.com/middle-east/article-707361</a>
GIST	<p>A group calling itself Ahrar Sinjar has claimed to carry out a drone attack on a Turkish base in northern Iraq. According to Iranian media, which often reports on events that are linked to Iran and its proxies in the region – or somehow benefit Iran– the attack targeted the Turkish base <a href="#">at Bashiqa</a> east of Mosul and involved “six kamikaze drones.” Other reports said four drones were used and that one struck the base.</p> <p><b>The Zilkan base - the crown jewel</b></p> <p>This Turkish base is sometimes called the Zilkan base and it is located on the borders of the autonomous <a href="#">Kurdistan</a> region of northern Iraq and areas of Nineveh province that are governed by Iraqi federal forces and include Shi’ite militias and other pro-Iranian groups like the Hashd al-Shaabi Brigade 30 of Shebek minorities.</p> <p>The Hashd or PMU is a large umbrella group of militias, many of which are Shi’ite and pro-Iran. Since 2018, they have been organized as an official paramilitary force and they maintain checkpoints in some areas of Iraq. Many of these groups are either directly linked to Iran, like Kataib Hezbollah, or are territorial and minority brigades that secure areas where the Iraqi army is weak. In that context, they can easily fire rockets at US forces or Turkey or Erbil from areas such as the Nineveh plains east of Mosul.</p> <p>The Turkey base that was targeted near Bashiqa previously was used to support Iraqis who had fled Mosul during the ISIS war and later the base was increasingly considered controversial by pro-Iran politicians in Baghdad who view it as Turkish encroachment into Iraq.</p> <p><b>Turkey vs. PKK fights play out at military bases</b></p> <p>Turkey has a dozen bases and outposts in the mountains of northern Iraq often confined to the border region where Turkey claims to be fighting “PKK terrorists.” However, in recent years, <a href="#">Turkey has launched new operations in this mountainous area</a> and penetrated deeper into northern Iraq, closer to the Kurdish cities of Dohuk and Erbil.</p> <p>Turkey also uses drones and warplanes to strike at areas in Sinjar and Makhmour. Sinjar is where Yazidis live, people who suffered ISIS genocide. Makhmour is not far from Kirkuk and is an area where there is a refugee camp for Kurds. Turkey accuses the PKK of having bases in these places, but locals say Ankara has targeted civilians and local activists.</p> <p><b>The same drones in Iraq, Iran and Gaza</b></p> <p>In recent years, the Turkish base at Bashiqa has come under frequent rocket fire. These are similar to rocket attacks that have targeted US forces and facilities in Iraq. Usually, the rockets are 107mm rockets fired from trucks. Pro-Iran militias in Iraq have also increasingly resorted to use drones similar to the kamikaze UAVs <a href="#">used by the Houthis</a> and <a href="#"> Hamas in Gaza</a>. These have targeted Erbil, US forces at various facilities and even the Prime Minister’s house.</p>

THE LATEST REPORT from Tasnim news says six drones were used in the attack. The report names Ahrar Sinjar as the group behind the attack. “We have already warned of the consequences of Turkey’s continued invasion of Iraq and its safe-havens,” the media says. Iranian media often reports on incidents like this when they are linked to pro-Iran groups and they get the statement directly from the group. Pro-Iran groups in Iraq often create new fake names for themselves in order to create plausible deniability, so that the new “group” can’t be targeted because it may not exist; it may be a stand-in for an existing group.

“Our operation was carried out in response to the recent aggression on the outskirts of Kirkuk and Dohuk,” the statement by the new Ahrar Sinjar group said. “These drones hit the intended targets with high accuracy, as a result of which the occupiers suffered material and human losses,” the group stressed. Tasnim news said that “some Iraqi sources say two Turkish soldiers and a Turkish army contractor were killed in the drone strike.”

Rudaw media in Erbil noted that “a drone on Saturday night targeted a military base housing Turkish troops in northern Iraq, killing one person, as Turkey’s offensive against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) stationed in the Kurdistan Region’s mountains continues.

” This report does not mention six drones and it appears to link the attack to the Turkish conflict with the PKK. “A drone fell on the Turkish base tonight and injured one person who later passed away,” Mohammed Amin, mayor of Zilkan subdistrict, where the base is located, told the media network, Rudaw, on Saturday. According to Rudaw, the man killed in the attack was a chef at the base who is from the Kurdistan region.

### **What do the people think?**

Reports online posted about the attack as well. Some posts said the attack was in response to Turkish “occupation” and operations in northern Iraq. The posts claim that the attacks would continue. Some of those posting about this are supporters of Iran and Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq. One of the posts linked the name of the group to the Yazidi minority in Iraq. Turkish airstrikes have targeted Sinjar where Yazidis live.

Some Yazidis are members of the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) which Turkey has attacked in the past. Ankara claims these groups are linked to the PKK. In the last weeks there have been clashes between YBS and the Iraqi army. Thousands have fled and some believe that Turkey had encouraged Iraq to pursue these clashes.

The Iraqi army moved into Sinjar in October 2017 after the Kurdistan referendum, causing Kurdish Peshmerga to leave. However, the YBS which had been fighting ISIS, remained behind. Some sources at the time said the YBS and other Yazidi factions had decided to work with the Iraqi federal forces and also groups linked to the Hashd al-Shaabi.

Turkey pressured Iraq to expel the PKK from Sinjar. Iraq claimed several times between 2018 and 2020 that “armed elements” had left Sinjar. Turkey continued bombing the area, claiming “terror” threats. Turkey has threatened to invade this area.

ALLEGATIONS THAT the Hashd and PKK have coordinated go back several years. In the time after the Iraqi army moved into Sinjar these allegations grew. Turkey has even claimed in December 2020, that PKK members joined the Hashd. The Turkish pro-government Daily Sabah claimed at the time that “Sinjar District Governor Mahma Halil said Wednesday that there is no sign of withdrawal by PKK terrorists from the northern Iraqi district, as envisaged by the US-backed agreement, adding that they are joining the Iran-backed Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces - PMF) paramilitary group instead.

“Majority of PKK terrorists joined Hashd al-Shaabi. A group of terrorists might be infiltrated into Tal Afar and Kirkuk as well,” Halil said, Turkish daily Yeni Şafak reported.” This suits that pro-government far-right narrative of Ankara, which wants an excuse to invade Sinjar. Days before the drone attack a statement provided to Turkey’s Anadolu news agency, also claimed that the “Hashd al-Shaabi supports PKK in Sinjar.”

The complexity of Sinjar and the latest attack on the Turkish base could be connected. In late 2021, three PMU brigades, brigades 21, 14 and 33, were sent to Sinjar amid tensions with Turkey. These were a Badr brigade, Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada and a third brigade. Another unit of the Hashd has included Yazidis as part of its Lalish regiment for several years, dating back to 2017.

#### **What does Iranian media say?**

What is interesting about the reports of the attack on the Turkish base is the extent to which Iranian media appears to be highlighting and celebrating the attack. IRNA in Iran says Turkey is waiting for more attacks, and other reports pointed to the “quality” of the drones. These reports also indicate the “great accuracy” of the drones. The reports imply also that the Ahrar Sinjar statement did not specify the type or number of drones, meaning Iranian media obtained the number via another method.

The implication is that Iranian media is backing this campaign. While Kurdish media reported about the PKK-Turkey tensions, Iran’s media highlights the fact that Turkey is occupying northern Iraq, a source of anger in Baghdad for some years. Iran’s official news agency, IRNA, says “the presence of the Turkish army deep in Iraq and the establishment of more than 40 bases on Iraqi soil has aroused great sensitivity in various Iraqi groups, especially the Iraqi resistance groups. To this must be added the almost daily attacks of Turkish helicopters, fighters and drones on northern Iraq and, in particular, on Duhok in the Kurdistan Region; where Turkey claims that the forces of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) are stationed, this has provided an excuse for Ankara to continue its attacks on northern Iraq.”

ROCKETS HAVE been fired at the Bashiqa base in early April and late April, and in January, as well as numerous times before. In late April, a report also said that Turkey had used a drone to target pro-Iran militias. These increasing rocket attacks and tensions indicate that the base has become a flashpoint.

Turkey is also worried about responding directly to pro-Iran elements. The fact that Sinjar has become the site of new clashes between the Iraqi army and Yazidis seems to make it questionable whether Iran would then work with Yazidi groups in Sinjar or PKK affiliates to attack the Turkish base.

What would be the point of Iraq pushing Yazidi groups out of Sinjar, causing 10,000 people to flee, while Iranian militias allied to the same Iraqi government form ties to Yazidi armed groups and provide the technology for drones to be used against the Bashiqa base? More likely, the same pro-Iran groups involved in targeting the Bashiqa base in the past used the drones they have used against US forces, Erbil and others, to attack the base.

The creation of a new “group” called Ahrar Sinjar may be the excuse for them to strike at Turkey now, alleging to be responding to other Turkish attacks. That Ankara has mobilized its media to blame the PKK is easier for Ankara than blaming Iran.

Iraq thus becomes a proxy battlefield. Another scenario is that in the wake of the clashes between the Iraqi army and Yazidi militia, YBS, the Hashd has sought to divert local frustrations with the clashes by working to encourage attacks on the Turkish base. That pro-Iranian social media has celebrated the attack points to an angle that benefits Iran in some way.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 US-trained militia, weapons in deadly attack</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/5dq7wn/puntland-security-force-somalia-cia">https://www.vice.com/en/article/5dq7wn/puntland-security-force-somalia-cia</a>
GIST	<p>At least 22 people including 2 children were killed, and dozens more injured, by US-made weapons that were directly supplied to a Somali counter-terrorism force that split and fought internally over control of US-supplied assets, VICE World News can confirm after an independent review of the weapons involved.</p> <p>The deadly violence took place late last year over days of battles among fighters from the Puntland Security Force (PSF), a militia that the CIA created and which Navy SEALs have been mentoring since the early 2000s. The PSF was built to fight the al-Qaeda-backed militant group al-Shabaab. Its</p>

headquarters are in Bosaso, a major port city in Puntland, a semi-autonomous, coastal state in Somalia's north.

Three of Saciid Shidow's children – aged 8, 12 and 35 – were killed and four – 6, 8, 9 and 13 – were injured when a mortar hit his house a little after 7AM at the end of December. The children were at home because their school had been closed due to the fighting. Shidow works as a cook for the staff of an infrastructure company outside Bosaso, nearly 500 miles from the city. He told VICE World News he was at work on the morning of the attack and found out after receiving a call from one of his surviving sons. He does not like to speak of what happened, it causes him great pain.

The mortar fire also damaged a hospital, the State House and local businesses, and, along with the overall fighting, caused the [reported displacement](#) of about 100,000 people - nearly half of the population of Bosaso. The mortars involved in the fighting were all made in Arkansas.

The violence itself was, at least indirectly, also prompted by US influence: the PSF [had split](#) and was in an internal bloody political brawl over the military resources that the US had supplied the group before about 750 American military personnel withdrew in January 2021, in what was one of the final acts of the Trump administration. Earlier this week, less than 24 hours after Somalia elected a new President, US President Joe Biden announced he approved a plan to send "under 500" ground forces back into Somalia, reversing the Trump administration's decision. The returning troops will be training Somali forces. It is unclear if any will go back to the Puntland area.

When they withdrew last year, US forces took the majority of their arms with them but US-made mortars, as well as guns from other sources like battered AK-47s among other kit, remained. An internal security assessment leaked to VICE World News notes that mortar shelling caused much of the death and destruction in Bosaso at the end of 2021. "A mixture of 81/2 mm, as well as 60 mm mortar shells, were fired into the civilian community, killing and wounding a number of civilians," the document reads.

Some of the mortars that the US left behind had been made for training purposes, and the PSF also deployed those wildly in the fight. "The shelling seems to have been random, and into civilian areas," the leaked report says. Indeed, photos and video from Somali news, and others shared on social media from the time of the fighting show buildings and shops peppered with holes.

One video segment from Puntland State TV focuses on damage to Ayaan hospital, the main hospital in town, and a hospital staffer who was killed. "We were in a very precarious situation, sandwiched between two warring forces," Dr Hinda Jama Ahmed recalled in the state TV clip. Ahmed said that she and others had slept in the hospital for three days because they could not get out safely. Speaking of Mohamed Abdi, the staffer who was killed, Ahmed said he was "the backbone of the hospital." According to the doctor, Abdi was killed around 11:30 at night by mortar fire while he was bringing food to others. The doctor also said the clashes prevented the hospital from caring for patients – including wounded soldiers. "We were under siege," she said. "We couldn't even send our medical staff to go out and help those in need since firing was coming from both sides."

The PSF has long been considered one of the most successful militias in countering al-Shabaab, and Puntland is one of Somalia's most comparatively stable states. At approximately 600-strong, the group is largely autonomous, operating independently of Somali government control. Exactly who then owns the PSF and its many assets – especially a US-funded compound in Bosaso which houses plentiful weapons – has never been explicitly stated. This lack of clarity was a significant contributor to the tension in the PSF when the US withdrew. "The USA trained and equipped forces and left us without making the proper handover and configuration," a Somali researcher told VICE World News. The researcher did not want to be named out of concern for personal security because of the sensitivity of the topic, which implicates a number of powerful Somali families and the Somali and US government.

When US forces withdrew under Trump, Somalia was mired in an election dispute that just concluded on Sunday, after over a year. The fighting between PSF soldiers in Puntland is an extension of that greater national political turmoil which had been building in the country for the last few years. It has made room

for the expansion of al-Shabaab, the fundamentalist insurgent group the PSF and others were formed to combat. ISIS-Somalia also has a small presence in Puntland. During the December standoff, PSF soldiers even moved from frontline positions where they were combatting al-Shabaab, back to their Bosaso headquarters to fight each other. The fighting in Puntland stopped at the end of the year. When it stalled, attention turned to presidential elections in the national capital, Mogadishu. Puntland's president, Said Abdullahi Deni, was ahead in the pack running for the President of Somalia, though he did not win

When asked if conflict between the PSF in Puntland might resume the Somali researcher said, "Yes, I strongly believe it." The researcher explained that the fundamental power struggle between the powerful family and the Puntland state, which both claim the PSF and its assets, has not been solved.

The PSF is part of the legacy of the militias that the US armed and backed in the early noughties in the name of combatting terrorism. The CIA began building up the force in 2002, and about a decade ago, Navy SEALs took over the mission of training and supporting the unit. In creating it, the US empowered a single family dynasty, the "Dianos", that directed the militia for three generations. First Osman Abdullahi Diano, then two of his sons ran the group. In 2018 Mohamed Diano replaced his brother Asad Diano, who ran against the current President of Puntland for the state leadership role. Their mother was the head of projects and logistic support to the PSF. Other family members were put in similarly plum positions. This primed the family to stand up various other entities related to security, especially allegedly, a fuel company, which further benefited from American counterterrorism support.

As the US withdrew in early 2021, Somali politics was becoming increasingly tense. At the end of the year, in late November, the current President of Puntland fired the director of the PSF for vague reasons allegedly related to issues with promotions.

The PSF director, however, refused to leave, arguing that his family owned the PSF. The group then itself divided between loyalties to the two directors. Anecdotal reports suggest that most PSF soldiers stayed with the force itself and the new commander, but the ones that remained loyal allegedly had access to the better US-made weapons and controlled the compound, allowing them to mount a fierce fight. "The whole fact that they [the Diano family] went to war with the Puntland state and the argument was 'this is our own project' – that kind of tells you," a Somali analyst told VICE World News over WhatsApp. Like the researcher, the analyst requested anonymity for security reasons. "They thought the PSF belonged to them. They still do." Before the brawl, in early December, it was reported that traditional elders got involved to try to stymie the bloodshed. Notably, the elders ruled that while the firing was legal, the group decided that the buildings, weapons and vehicles that the PSF uses belong to the Diano family. The ruling was deemed politically motivated, but is, regardless, indicative of the extent to which the US funded one individual family.

"The US' support to the establishment and maintenance of the PSF clearly has had political ramifications in Puntland, which may not have always been clear to the US or also downplayed at times in the face of counter-terrorism objectives," Omar Mahmood, the Senior Eastern Africa Analyst for the International Crisis Group told VICE World News. "Oftentimes external actors operating in Somalia want to build institutions, but instead end up more strongly supporting individuals as a means to get there. Support to the PSF appears to have been subject to this familiar trap."

In response to questions a representative from US Africa Command (AFRICOM) did not deny the presence of US-made mortars. A representative told VICE World News over email, "Though AFRICOM continues to provide assistance to Somali partner forces, the primary tools of our engagement strategy include security force assistance programs, military-to-military engagements, and operations -- all activities are closely coordinated with the US embassy country team and the government of Somalia."

The representative also noted, "US forces were not involved in any partner nation military operations in Puntland during the December timeframe, nor has the command received any civilian casualty claims against the US government." Neither representatives for the government of Puntland, the PSF nor Puntland officials responded to requests for comment.



“Weapons dispersion stemming from US arms transfers frequently leads to inevitable consequences such as civilian casualties and other negative, unintended effects to US security,” said Jordan Cohen, a defence and foreign policy analyst at the CATO Institute who focuses on arms sales. “This has happened across South and Central America, Afghanistan, and now, Somalia. A significant degree of transfers are being provided to Ukraine right now and these examples show what can go wrong.”

The weapons supplied to the PSF were against UN sanctions. In a 2016 report, the UN Security Council noted “with concern” that the US had not complied with the regulations ahead of supplying the weapons. Jay Bahadur, who served as the arms group expert for the Council until 2019 noted that mortars – the weapons that killed Shidow’s children – are a particularly problematic element in an urban environment like Bosaso. “The introduction of the mortars adds an element to the conflict that you haven’t traditionally seen in Puntland,” he told VICE World News.

In early March, Puntland’s President reappointed Diano to the Directorial position, demonstrating, to a Somali analyst who requested to remain anonymous for safety, “the outsize influence of the PSF that they can force the state to capitulate to them.”

“Ultimately the situation is a clear lesson that every external intervention has a political angle, and that the pursuit of counterterrorism objectives in Somalia should always be considered with this in mind,” Mahmood, of Crisis Group, concluded.

In December the humanitarian organisation Save The Children released a statement saying it “is deeply saddened by the reports of children being killed and displaced in the recent conflicts in Bosaso in the Puntland state of Somalia.” Because of the sensitivity of the topic, Save the Children would not elaborate on the statement.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 State Dept. revokes five FTO designations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/state-department-announces-revocation-of-five-foreign-terrorist-organizations-designations/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/state-department-announces-revocation-of-five-foreign-terrorist-organizations-designations/</a>
GIST	<p>The Department of State announced the revocation of five Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designations under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA): Basque Fatherland and Liberty, Aum Shinrikyo, Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem, Kahane Chai, and Gama’al-Islamiyya. All five organizations will remain designated as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT) entities under Executive Order 13224. The Department is retaining these SDGT designations for a number of reasons, including to support law enforcement actions or ensure frozen assets are not released to still active individual terrorists.</p> <p>In addition to these five FTO revocations, the Department of State is also announcing the revocation of six now deceased individuals as SDGTs designated under Executive Order 13224: Abu al-Wardah, Mohad Moalim, Farah Mohamed Shirdon, Musa Abu Dawud, Aliaskhab Kebekov, and Ibrahim al-Rubaysh.</p> <p>As required by the INA, the Department reviews FTO designations every five years to determine if the circumstances that were the basis of the designation have changed in such a manner as to warrant a revocation. Our review of these five FTO designations determined that, as defined by the INA, the five organizations are no longer engaged in terrorism or terrorist activity and do not retain the capability and intent to do so. Therefore, as required by the INA, these FTO designations are being revoked.</p> <p>These actions are intended to reflect the United States’ resolve to comply with legal requirements to review and revoke FTO designations when the facts compel such action. These revocations do not seek to overlook or excuse the terrorist acts each of these groups previously engaged in or the harm the organizations caused its victims, but rather recognize the success Egypt, Israel, Japan, and Spain have had in defusing the threat of terrorism by these groups. Revoking FTO designations and the delisting of deceased individuals ensures our terrorism sanctions remain current and credible and does not reflect any</p>



	<p>change in policy towards the past activities of any of these terrorists or of the organizations in which they were members.</p> <p>The United States remains committed to combating the activities of terrorists worldwide.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Cuba ‘not cooperating fully over terrorism’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.jurist.org/news/2022/05/us-state-department-cuba-not-cooperating-fully-in-fight-against-terrorism/">https://www.jurist.org/news/2022/05/us-state-department-cuba-not-cooperating-fully-in-fight-against-terrorism/</a>
GIST	<p>The Biden-Harris administration Friday re-added Cuba to the United States’ list of countries which are “not cooperating fully against terrorism.” Secretary of State Anthony Blinken made the announcement via <a href="#">Public Notice 11747</a> in the Federal Register. The full list includes Iran, North Korea, Syria and Venezuela. Blinken must now submit the updated list to Congress for review.</p> <p>The move was met with <a href="#">derision</a> by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez, who stated: The US is well aware of Cuba’s clean slate in the struggle against terrorism as well as Cuba’s experience as victim of State terrorism. It resorts to slanders in such a sensitive issue as a pretext to continue the unremitting economic warfare repudiated all over the world.</p> <p>Rodriguez <a href="#">alleged</a> that the move is pre-text for the United States to disinvite Cuba from the upcoming <a href="#">Summit of the Americas</a> in Los Angeles, CA. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has threatened not to attend the summit, in retaliation for the potential exclusion of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. Lopez <a href="#">stated</a>, “[p]articipation in the Los Angeles Summit has not yet been resolved because we are proposing that no one is excluded because we seek the unity of all America.”</p> <p>The Biden-Harris administration <a href="#">lifted some travel restrictions</a> for Americans wishing to <a href="#">travel to Cuba</a>. However, the administration has also maintained <a href="#">Cuba’s</a> place on the ‘<a href="#">State Sponsors of Terrorism</a>’ list after former President Trump added it days before he left office. Ned Price, spokesperson for the US Department of State, <a href="#">claims</a>, “[t]he Administration’s policy towards Cuba continues to focus first and foremost on support for the Cuban people, including their human rights and their political and economic well-being.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 ‘Lone wolf’ label to white supremacists?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/lone-wolf-label-dangerous-describing-white-supremacists/story?id=84776550">https://abcnews.go.com/US/lone-wolf-label-dangerous-describing-white-supremacists/story?id=84776550</a>
GIST	<p>When the FBI discusses the threat of domestic extremism, they often refer to "lone actors," known alternatively as "lone wolves."</p> <p>In fact, just days before a gunman <a href="#">opened fire</a> in Buffalo, New York and killed 10 Black people, FBI director Chris Wray <a href="#">called lone actors</a> "the greatest terrorist threat we face."</p> <p>"Because they act alone and move quickly from radicalization to action—often using easily obtainable weapons against soft targets—these attackers don’t leave a lot of “dots” for investigators to connect, and not a lot of time in which to connect them," <a href="#">Wray said earlier</a>, in a September 2021 address.</p> <p>Specifically with regard to racially motivated violence, a top FBI counterterror official <a href="#">said in a 2019 Congressional hearing</a> that the current threat was "decentralized and characterized by lone actors radicalized online" -- a change from organized groups in the 1980s and early 2000s.</p> <p>While the DOJ and FBI did not use the term in their statements about the alleged Buffalo gunman, some experts say that classifying white supremacist shooters as lone actors or lone wolves belies the growing threat of racist extremism in the United States and the leaderless transnational movement that underpins it.</p> <p><b>Growing threat</b></p>

Policy research organization [Center for Strategic and International Studies \(CSIS\)](#) found that alleged right-wing attacks and plots have accounted for the majority of all U.S. terrorist incidents since 1994. CSIS found that right-wing extremists were responsible for more than 500 of the 893 terrorist attacks and plots between 1994 and 2020.

Kathleen Belew, a historian who studies the white power movement, testified [before Congress in another 2019 hearing about the tactics](#) that have allowed such extremism to remain primarily in the shadows.

"This movement connected neo-Nazis, Klansmen, Skinheads, radical tax protesters, militia members, and others," testified Belew. "It brought together people in every region of the country. It joined people in suburbs and cities and on mountain tops. It joined men, women, and children; felons and religious leaders; high school dropouts and aerospace engineers, civilians and veterans and active-duty troops."

She said two effective strategies that the movement still employs started in the 80s: the use of computer-based social network activism and the implementation of leaderless resistance.

Online forums and social media have continued to serve as vital tools for spreading racist ideologies, misinformation, conspiracies and hate. It's led to the rapid radicalization of people like the alleged Buffalo shooter, Payton Gendron, according to an ABC News analysis of what authorities have identified as Gendron's writing.

Gendron has been indicted by a grand jury for first-degree murder, but all charges remain under seal. He will be arraigned on July 9. Gendron was initially charged with one count of murder, to which he pleaded not guilty and was ordered to be held without bail.

The FBI and DOJ have not responded to ABC News' request for comment.

"The online environment serves terrorists in several very valuable ways," said Daniel Byman, a professor at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at Brookings Institute. "It gives them very easy reach. Ideas kind of ricochet around the world very rapidly and people can form communities around the world."

#### **Alleged Buffalo gunman's online interactions**

Gendron said he was radicalized in recent years after engaging with white supremacists online, according to a document authorities say details his plans and motives that has been reviewed by ABC News.

These documents show Gendron self-radicalizing when the pandemic began, spending inordinate amounts of time reading hate posts on social media, a senior law enforcement source briefed on the case told ABC News.

In the months and weeks leading up to his alleged attack on the Buffalo supermarket mass shooting, he became increasingly violent in tone on online platforms, according to the source.

In the document allegedly detailing his plans for attack, he expressed racist and antisemitic sentiments and declared white supremacist conspiracies as his motive behind the attack.

"Violent extremists are increasingly using social media for the distribution of propaganda, recruitment, target selection, and incitement to violence," FBI officials Michael C. McGarrity and Calvin A. Shivers said in a 2019 statement to the House Oversight Committee during a hearing on white supremacy.

"Through the Internet, violent extremists around the world have access to our local communities to target and recruit like-minded individuals and spread their messages of hate on a global scale."

#### **'Leaderless resistance'**

There are many individuals like Gendron, as well as small networks of activists, working toward the common goal of white supremacy without being tied to one specific movement, organization or effort -- the tactic of leaderless resistance, Byman said.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Louis Beam, a well-known white nationalist, wrote a widely circulated essay popularizing the concept.

"Leaderless resistance has had a much more catastrophic impact in clouding public understanding of white power as a social movement," Belew said.

This is why such attacks have become difficult to prevent, according to Seth Jones, the senior vice president of CSIS.

Individual efforts can be harder to track: "Unlike the 9/11 terrorist attack which was an actual plot by an organized group, the vast majority of attacks and plots that we see in the United States are happening by individuals, or a very small network of individuals that make a decision to use violence," Jones told ABC News.

He said leaderless resistance tactics are designed to be difficult to track, allowing violent plots and motives to slip under the radar.

"The problem is the plots are not orchestrated, planned, and then executed by the leaders of any of these organizations," he said. "They're essentially either foot soldiers or individuals that have been reading their propaganda online or interacting with people in person."

Thinking of individual actors as "lone wolves" ignores the captive audience of white supremacists who remain in the wake of such a tragedy, experts say.

"It's a much bigger issue than we're seeing just with this particular attack," Jones said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Morocco prisons reintegrate extremists</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/05/349209/moroccan-prisons-use-special-method-to-reintegrate-extremist-convicts">https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/05/349209/moroccan-prisons-use-special-method-to-reintegrate-extremist-convicts</a>
GIST	<p>Rabat - Morocco's General Delegation for Prison Administration and Reintegration (<a href="#">DGAPR</a>) has outlined a new approach the country's prisons will use to rehabilitate and reintegrate convicts arrested on extremism and terrorism charges.</p> <p>The special approach includes educational activities to teach prisoners basic academics and professional training, as well as extracurricular artistic and athletic activities.</p> <p>The prisons will also offer a peer education program serving to facilitate the process of social reintegration, with support from the United Nations, Japan's Government, and the <a href="#">Mohammedia League of Scholars</a>.</p> <p>So far, close to 48,000 convicts have benefitted from the program, Moulay Idriss Agelmam, Director of the Directorate of Social and Cultural Work For Prisoners, said.</p> <p>Inspired by Morocco's constitution and legislation, as well as international requirements and agreements, the approach seeks to help prisons fulfill their social function better, Agelmam added.</p> <p>Adding to this approach, Agelmam made mention of the Moussalaha (Reconciliation) program in Moroccan prisons, which seeks to offer extremists mental and social help to rehabilitate them and reintegrate them in society.</p> <p>The program is based on three main pillars -- reconciliation with the self, with religious text, and with society.</p>

	<p>Since its launch 10 years ago, 156 detainees benefited from the program and have been released, while fifteen others benefited from reduced sentences.</p> <p>Human resources being another important part of the process, Agelmam stressed that the DGAPR has worked on training its staff, adding that 96% of employees received training on how to combat extremism inside prisons.</p> <p>The training was conducted by 40 experts who were taught at the Global Center on Cooperative Security, he added.</p> <p>Morocco has been working on improving the national prison system. Recently, a 4 year program was put in place to improve detention conditions to a more <a href="#">humane</a> standard.</p> <p>The new measures include less crowding, reintegration programs, more sanitary conditions, and providing better development for the prison employees.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Buffalo shooting: threat online extremism</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Business/buffalo-shooting-highlights-threat-online-extremism-amid-pandemic/story?id=84815337">https://abcnews.go.com/Business/buffalo-shooting-highlights-threat-online-extremism-amid-pandemic/story?id=84815337</a>
GIST	<p>In the early months of the pandemic, security experts sounded the alarm over the possible escalation of online radicalization and terrorist violence as people isolated and spent more time on social media.</p> <p>An internal Department of Homeland Security memo in early 2020 <a href="#">cautioned</a> that the new pandemic lifestyle could “increase the vulnerability of some citizens to mobilize to violence.” The <a href="#">U.N. warned</a> in a November 2020 report of cases involving “malicious” use of social media for fomenting extremist beliefs.</p> <p>The suspect behind an attack on Saturday <a href="#">at a supermarket</a> in Buffalo, New York – which left 10 dead, all of whom were Black, and three others wounded – appears to have posted writing that epitomizes these fears. In a 180-page document, 18-year-old Payton Gendron, allegedly shared a litany of bigoted views and conspiracy theories. One theory he espoused -- “replacement theory” -- argues that Democrats are trying to bring about a demographic shift to consolidate power.</p> <p>Gendron has <a href="#">pleaded not guilty</a> to first-degree murder charges.</p> <p>The tragedy highlights the threat posed by online radicalization, several experts told ABC, pointing to a toxic blend of circumstances brought about by the pandemic: widespread social isolation, heightened social media use and the spread of conspiracy theories. Further, the prevalence of extremism on the internet has exposed the shortcomings of social media platforms to police content, experts said.</p> <p>The last two calendar years are the highest on record for domestic terror plots and attacks going back to at least 1994, the first year for which the Center for Strategic and International Studies collected such data, the Washington D.C.-based think tank said in a recent <a href="#">report</a>.</p> <p>The notion of radicalization can prove difficult to pin down because definitions vary, Deana Rohlinger, a professor at Florida State University who studies media and social movements, told ABC News. She defined the term as a process of interacting with individuals, groups, or pieces of content that engender pure or extremist views.</p> <p>She defines extremist views as those which are “fundamentally opposed to the status quo.” In the U.S., that would include opposition to the democratic welfare state or tolerance of diverse ideas, she said. A key component of the definition includes a consideration of or willingness to commit violence in advancing one’s viewpoint, she added.</p>

Ciaran O'Connor, an analyst at the London-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue who tracks internet disinformation and extremism, told ABC News that the alleged shooter "exhibits so many of the signs of people who have become engaged in conspiracies and extremist spaces over the last two years," citing reports of what the alleged shooter said in a 180-page document.

O'Connor and Rohlinger cited evidence that suggests an uptick in online radicalization during the pandemic. However, one expert questioned whether a rise in online radicalization has taken place.

Megan Squire, a professor of computer science at Elon University who focuses on far-right extremism online, said that research on the trend is "mixed," noting her own work, which found a decline in traffic to some far-right websites during the pandemic that belies the supposed rise in such content elsewhere online.

The American Civil Liberties Union, a staunch defender of free speech, criticizes the term "radicalization," arguing that the theory that extremist beliefs lead to violence is "unscientific" and ends up limiting constitutionally protected views.

As coronavirus cases and deaths mounted in the early days of the pandemic, the scientific community could not definitively explain the origins of the disease or how to stop its spread.

"It was a very complex period with no clear answer, no clear solutions," O'Connor said. "A lot of extremists were very successful offering solutions and someone to blame — they found a lot of people."

Marooned indoors, millions sought information and community on social media, Rohlinger said.

"Everyone's world became even smaller and less connected in the ways humans crave," she said.

"We don't always find the best communities in which to get engaged," she added.

Misinformation and conspiracy theories emerged in posts across major social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Membership in Facebook groups devoted to the conspiracy theory QAnon increased by 120% in March 2020, and engagement rates in such groups increased by 91% that month, a [study](#) from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue found.

Facebook announced a [ban on](#) QAnon pages in October 2020. The company pointed ABC News to a [blog post](#) that said, as of September 2021, the company had removed about 3,900 pages, 11,300 groups, 640 events, 50,300 Facebook profiles and 32,500 Instagram accounts for violating its policy against QAnon.

The company also removed about 4,000 Pages, 20,600 groups, 190 events, 54,900 Facebook profiles and 8,300 Instagram accounts related to militarized social movements, the blog post said.

Extremist views also circulated on lesser-known sites like 4chan, an anonymous imageboard site known for the appearance of hateful content. Gendron wrote that he visited 4chan during the pandemic. 4chan did not respond to a request for comment.

Discord, another social media site used by the alleged shooter in Buffalo, grew in popularity during the pandemic. The site is popular with teenagers and has been accused of spreading conspiracy theories.

"We extend our deepest sympathies to the victims and their families. Hate and violence have no place on Discord. We are doing everything we can to assist law enforcement in the investigation," a spokesperson for Discord told ABC News.

A [study](#) by researchers at Northwestern University, released in September 2020, found that individuals who received their news from social media were more likely to believe in misinformation about coronavirus conspiracies and risk factors.

	<p>Squire challenged the default acceptance of the claim made by Gendron that exposure to extremist ideas on 4chan radicalized him. “Because that was a prevailing narrative in the media [at the time], it may be he was just repeating that or following that logic placed in front of him,” she said.</p> <p>Online radicalization amid the pandemic has also drawn strength from the "mainstreaming" of extremist views among prominent politicians and public figures, Rohlinger told ABC News.</p> <p>When questioned by reporters Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell declined to <a href="#">directly denounce replacement theory</a>, which several members of his party have been accused of promoting.</p> <p>Asked if the eventual receding of the pandemic could lessen the threat of online radicalization, O'Connor said a reduction of time spent on the internet could have a “positive impact” on limiting exposure to extremist ideas.</p> <p>“A lot of seeds may have been planted for people,” he cautioned. “It’s hard to dissuade people once they’ve been exposed.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Togo as new frontier violent extremism?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://theconversation.com/togo-looks-like-west-africas-new-frontier-of-violent-extremism-183304">https://theconversation.com/togo-looks-like-west-africas-new-frontier-of-violent-extremism-183304</a>
GIST	<p>The threat of violent extremism across West Africa has been <a href="#">on the rise</a> in recent times.</p> <p>Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province have been active in the Lake Chad Basin region. <a href="#">Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin</a>, the <a href="#">Islamic State in the Greater Sahara</a> and <a href="#">Ansarul Islam in the Sahel</a>. The implications for the peace and security of the sub-region have never been more pronounced.</p> <p>The activities of these groups have led to the <a href="#">deaths of thousands</a> and <a href="#">displaced</a> many others across parts of West Africa. The result is a worsening <a href="#">humanitarian crisis</a>.</p> <p>Togo, despite its proximity to countries affected by violent extremism, is one West African country that has experienced relative peace and security, until recently. On May 10 and 11 jihadists <a href="#">attacked</a> a Togolese military outpost and killed eight Togolese soldiers.</p> <p>The incident was only a few kilometres away from neighbouring Burkina Faso, which struggles with <a href="#">incessant attacks from violent extremist organisations</a>.</p> <p>The African Union <a href="#">condemned</a> the attack and called on neighbouring states to redouble their efforts against terrorism in the region.</p> <p>No group has claimed responsibility yet for the latest attack, but the Terrorism Research &amp; Analysis Consortium, one of the world's largest databases of terrorists and terrorist groups, <a href="#">points a finger</a> at Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin. The group is <a href="#">backed by al-Qaida and operates in the Sahel region</a>.</p> <p>It is not the first time Togo has experienced an attack of this nature on security forces. The first was in November 2021, when a security post in a northern village was <a href="#">attacked</a>.</p> <p>The question is why these attacks have begun and what they imply for peace and security in the region. Having closely monitored the conflict and security dynamics of West Africa for over a decade, I am convinced the attacks have to do with the need of violent extremist organisations to establish a presence in Togo as part of a broader recruitment drive.</p> <p>Furthermore, the underlying socio-economic conditions in Togo make it a prime target for extremist activities. Togo bears the hallmarks of a fragile state in which violent extremism could thrive.</p> <p><b>Breeding grounds for violent extremism</b></p>



Some of the warning signs for countries being vulnerable to violent extremism are high rates of poverty, inequality, illiteracy, unemployment, corruption, weak institutions and poor governance.

Togo has a population of just over [8.5 million](#). Its [gross domestic product stood at US\\$7.5 billion in 2020](#). That of its immediate neighbour, Ghana, with a population of [32 million](#), was [US\\$72.3 billion](#).

Over [50%](#) of Togo's population live below the poverty line of US\$1.25 per day. It is one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world as measured by the Human Development Index which is based indicators such as life expectancy, education and per capita income. In 2019, Togo's index score was about [0.15, positioning it 167th out of 189 countries](#).

In 2021, the life expectancy at birth in Togo was [61.49](#) years and about [40%](#) of its citizens are illiterate. These rates are similar to Burkina Faso, a country which struggles with violent extremism, where the [life expectancy at birth was 61.6% and illiteracy was 58.8%](#).

Togo has the conditions for extremism to take root.

Poverty [contributes](#) to violent extremism as it can provide a way, for those that are desperate, out of economic hardship. Recruits are often provided with an income and protection.

When people are not educated, they're more [vulnerable](#) to exploitation and ideological manipulation.

Furthermore, low human capital development reinforces societal cleavages created as a result of years of neglect and poor governance, leading to marginalisation. This creates [feelings of](#) abandonment and resentment, a potential driver of violent extremism once allowed to fester and left unchecked.

### **Frustration**

Togo's indicators tell us that it's falling behind. This has also resulted in a heightened state of frustration among its citizens, most of which is directed at [the state's authoritarian rule](#).

These grievances have been expressed through [street protests](#).

A [previous attempt](#) at infiltrating Togo in the same place as the latest attacks, could signal a coordinated effort by violent extremist organisations to exploit these local grievances.

### **Extremism in West Africa**

Togo joins the ranks of other countries in the region that have experienced terrorism attacks by violent extremist organisations. These include Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Benin, [Côte d'Ivoire](#) and Burkina Faso.

Peace and security across the region is further threatened by the [recent decision](#) of the Malian junta to withdraw from the G5 Sahel force. The force, which is expected to contribute to peace, has suffered some operational hindrances owing to a lack of funds. Mali's withdrawal could trigger other Sahelian states to opt out to suit their own strategic interests.

Though the affected states in West Africa have commenced a [regional response](#) to the threat of violent extremism, such as [Operation Koudanlgou 4 Zone 2](#), its sustainability remains uncertain due to insufficient funding.

The same can be said of the [Accra Initiative](#), which was launched in 2017 by Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo in response to violent extremism and transnational organised crime.

Most of the countries in the region are poor. They have operational funding challenges and insufficiently equipped military forces. They lack smart technology such as unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) for intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance missions at the borderlands.



### What's at stake

By establishing a presence in Togo, extremist groups stand to gain by recruiting foot soldiers. Being in northern Togo also puts them close to Burkina Faso, enabling cross-border collaborations and attacks with other violent extremists operating in the area.

The more violent extremist organisations are able to demonstrate their viciousness, the more international attention they attract, that gives them a negotiating edge, as well as financial and logistical support from their parent organisation – in this case Al-Qaida.

West African states must act quickly and decisively to avert instability across the sub-region from violent extremism. Given the constraints highlighted above, they must prioritise efforts aimed at addressing the underlying socio-economic triggers of violent extremism, in addition to fundamentally improving relations between the state and society.

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/20 Ports target cruise ship 'green corridor'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/a-cruise-ship-green-corridor-in-the-pnw-ports-make-pact-over-carbon-emission-goals/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/a-cruise-ship-green-corridor-in-the-pnw-ports-make-pact-over-carbon-emission-goals/</a>
GIST	<p>The Port of Seattle is teaming up with other ports and cruise lines to try to form a “green corridor” where the massive ships that carry passengers through the coastal waters of British Columbia and Alaska would eventually operate without fossil fuels.</p> <p>The announcement comes at a time when the carbon footprint of the cruise ship industry is under increasing scrutiny, and the companies that operate these ships are investing in new engine technology and taking other steps to reduce pollution.</p> <p>The corridor, if launched, would require coordinated, long-range planning to figure out what fuels most likely will be used to power vessels, and what shore-side support would be needed in ports along the way in an expanding Alaska cruise ship industry that now includes nearly 300 departures during a six-month cruise season.</p> <p>“We at Carnival Corporation have ambitious goals ... getting to net-zero greenhouse gases [by 2050] said Jan Swartz, president of the Holland American Group, a Carnival subsidiary in a Tuesday online interview with reporters. ” ... We can’t achieve our goals alone, and we need strong collaboration between government and business.”</p> <p>Others who have signed a “first movers commitment” include the city of Juneau, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, Royal Caribbean Group and the Cruise Lines International Association.</p> <p>In 2021, 24 nations, <a href="#">including the U.S.</a> and Canada, signed a declaration to support at least six green corridors for maritime traffic by 2025. They are supposed to support the development of new maritime fuels during the push to reach <a href="#">net-zero emissions by 2050</a>, which is the date that scientists say greenhouse gas reductions must be accomplished to limit the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>“We’re bringing together people, resources and technological advancements ... so that commercially viable zero-greenhouse-gas ships will sail in the near future,” said Fred Felleman, a Port of Seattle commissioner.</p> <p>The carbon emissions of a cruise ship can vary greatly. One estimate, developed by Bryan Comer of the International Council on Clean Transportation, earlier this month estimated a cruise ship passenger on a five-night cruise that covered about 1,200 miles on an energy-efficient cruise line would have a carbon</p>

footprint about double that of a traveler who flew and stayed in a hotel. That was based on an estimate of a vessel that uses heavy fuel oil, according to Comer.

Cruise ship companies already are moving to new fuels.

Carnival Cruise Line has switched from marine diesel to liquefied natural gas able to power four of its vessels both at sea and port. This change can reduce carbon emissions by 20% and also slash nitrogen oxide and particulate pollution, according to a company statement. But liquefied natural gas is a fossil fuel, and the production and transport of natural gas can result in the release of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

To get to net-zero emissions, Carnival and other cruise lines are exploring technologies that include battery packs and biofuels. Another research focus is fuel cells, which could be run on hydrogen produced from renewable energy sources or from methanol derived from renewable resources such as wood.

“I think, right now, we consider everything on the table,” said Swartz during a news briefing this week about the green corridor.

In 2021, [Carnival](#) announced the test of a fuel cell on passenger vessels. Also last year, Royal Caribbean Groups announced the development of a new class of ships with hybrid technology that would enable the vessels to derive power from hydrogen fuel cells as well as liquefied natural gas and batteries.

Developing a shore-side network to produce, store and sell green hydrogen is a big challenge.

In Washington state, the Port of Seattle is working with Seattle City Light and Pacific Northwest Energy Laboratory to study the risks and potential of large-scale hydrogen storage.

In March of last year, the Douglas County Public Utility District broke ground on [a \\$20 million pilot project](#) to harness hydropower, during periods of weak market demand, to produce hydrogen. It was initially expected to be operating by the end of that year. But there have been supply chain disruptions, and delays in engineering and design work. Bids also have come in at double engineers’ estimates. The current goal is for production to begin by May 2023, according to Meaghan Vibbert, a public information officer for the utility.

Elsewhere in the West, Air Liquide, a French corporation, is preparing later this month to open a facility that will convert landfill methane to liquid hydrogen.

To move forward with the green cruise ship corridor, participants plan to meet within the next month. “That will kick off work on a charter for the green corridor, and then to develop a work plan,” said Steve Metruck, executive director of the Port of Seattle.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/23 Monkeypox spread by 2 mass events?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/health-world-organization-united-nations-animals-72a9efaaf5b55ace396398b839847505">https://apnews.com/article/health-world-organization-united-nations-animals-72a9efaaf5b55ace396398b839847505</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — A leading adviser to the World Health Organization described the unprecedented outbreak of the rare disease <a href="#">monkeypox</a> in developed countries as “a random event” that might be explained by risky sexual behavior at two recent mass events in Europe.</p> <p>In an interview with The Associated Press, Dr. David Heymann, who formerly headed WHO’s emergencies department, said the leading theory to explain the spread of the disease was sexual transmission among gay and bisexual men at two raves held in Spain and Belgium. Monkeypox has not previously triggered widespread outbreaks beyond <a href="#">Africa</a>, where it is endemic in animals.</p>

“We know monkeypox can spread when there is close contact with the lesions of someone who is infected, and it looks like sexual contact has now amplified that transmission,” said Heymann.

That marks a significant departure from the disease’s typical pattern of spread in central and western Africa, where people are mainly infected by animals like wild rodents and primates and outbreaks have not spread across borders.

To date, WHO has recorded more than 90 cases of monkeypox in a dozen countries including Britain, Spain, Israel, France, Switzerland, the U.S. and Australia.

Madrid’s senior health official said on Monday that the Spanish capital has recorded 30 confirmed cases so far. Enrique Ruiz Escudero said authorities are investigating possible links between a recent Gay Pride event in the Canary Islands, which drew some 80,000 people, and cases at a Madrid sauna.

Heymann chaired an urgent meeting of WHO’s advisory group on infectious disease threats on Friday to assess the ongoing epidemic and said there was no evidence to suggest that monkeypox might have mutated into a more infectious form.

Monkeypox typically causes fever, chills, rash, and lesions on the face or genitals. It can be spread through close contact with an infected person or their clothing or bedsheets, but sexual transmission has not yet been documented. Most people recover from the disease within several weeks without requiring hospitalization. Vaccines against smallpox, a related disease, are also effective in preventing monkeypox and some antiviral drugs are being developed.

The disease can be fatal in about 10% of infections, but no deaths have been reported among the current cases.

WHO said the outbreak is “atypical” and said the fact that cases are being seen in so many different countries suggests the disease may have been silently spreading for some time. The agency’s Europe director warned that as summer begins across the continent, mass gatherings, festivals and parties could accelerate the spread of monkeypox.

Other scientists have pointed out that it will be difficult to disentangle whether it is sex itself or the close contact related to sex that has driven the recent spread of monkeypox across Europe.

“By nature, sexual activity involves intimate contact, which one would expect to increase the likelihood of transmission, whatever a person’s sexual orientation and irrespective of the mode of transmission,” said Mike Skinner, a virologist at Imperial College London.

On Sunday, the chief medical adviser of Britain’s Health Security Agency, Dr. Susan Hopkins, said she expected more monkeypox cases to be identified in the country “on a daily basis.”

U.K. officials have said “a notable proportion” of the cases in Britain and Europe have been in young men with no history of travel to Africa and who are gay, bisexual or have sex with men. Authorities in Portugal and Spain also said their cases were in men who mostly had sex with other men and whose infections were picked up when they sought help for lesions at sexual health clinics.

Heymann, who is also a professor of infectious diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said the monkeypox outbreak was likely a random event that might be traceable to a single infection.

“It’s very possible there was somebody who got infected, developed lesions on the genitals, hands or somewhere else, and then spread it to others when there was sexual or close, physical contact,” Heymann hypothesized. “And then there were these international events that seeded the outbreak around the world, into the U.S. and other European countries.”

	<p>He emphasized that the disease was unlikely to trigger widespread transmission.</p> <p>“This is not COVID,” he said. “We need to slow it down, but it does not spread in the air and we have vaccines to protect against it.” Heymann said studies should be conducted rapidly to determine if monkeypox could be spread by people without symptoms and that populations at risk of the disease should take precautions to protect themselves.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/22 Mysterious liver illnesses in children</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/theories-emerge-for-mysterious-liver-illnesses-in-children/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/theories-emerge-for-mysterious-liver-illnesses-in-children/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — Health officials remain perplexed by mysterious cases of severe liver damage in hundreds of young children around the world.</p> <p>The best available evidence points to a fairly common stomach bug that isn’t known to cause liver problems in otherwise healthy kids. That virus was detected in the the blood of stricken children but — oddly — it has not been found in their diseased livers.</p> <p>“There’s a lot of things that don’t make sense,” said Eric Kremer, a virus researcher at the Institute of Molecular Genetics of Montpellier, in France.</p> <p>As health officials in more than a dozen countries look into the mystery, they are asking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Has there been some surge in the stomach bug — called adenovirus 41 — that is causing more cases of a previously undetected problem?</li> <li>— Are children more susceptible due to pandemic-related lockdowns that sheltered them from the viruses kids usually experience?</li> <li>— Is there some mutated version of the adenovirus causing this? Or some other not-yet-identified germ, drug or toxin?</li> <li>— Is it some kind of haywire immune system reaction set off by a past COVID-19 infection and a later invasion by some other virus?</li> </ul> <p>The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and investigators around the globe are trying to sort out what’s going on.</p> <p>The illnesses are considered rare. CDC officials last week said they are now looking into 180 possible cases across the U.S. Most of the children were hospitalized, at least 15 required liver transplants and six died.</p> <p>More than 20 other countries have reported hundreds more cases in total, though the largest numbers have been in the U.K. and U.S.</p> <p>Symptoms of hepatitis — or inflammation of the liver — include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, light-colored stools, joint pain and jaundice.</p> <p>The scope of the problem only started to become clear last month, though disease detectives say they have been working on the mystery for months. It’s been maddeningly difficult to nail a cause down, experts say.</p> <p>Conventional causes of liver inflammation in otherwise healthy kids — the viruses known as hepatitis A, B, C, D and E — didn’t show up in tests. What’s more, the children came from different places and there seemed to be no common exposures.</p>

What did show up was adenovirus 41. More than half of the U.S. cases have tested positive for adenovirus, of which there are dozens of varieties. In a small number of specimens tested to see what kind of adenovirus was present, adenovirus 41 came up every time.

The fact that adenovirus keeps showing up strengthens the case for it playing a role, but it's unclear how, Dr. Jay Butler, the CDC's deputy director for infectious diseases, told The Associated Press.

Many adenoviruses are associated with common cold symptoms, such as fever, sore throat and pink eye. Some versions — including adenovirus 41 — can trigger other problems, including inflammation in the stomach and intestines. Adenoviruses previously have been linked to hepatitis in children, but mostly in kids with weakened immune systems.

Recent genetic analysis has turned up no evidence that a single new mutant version of the virus is to blame, said Dr. Umesh Parashar, chief of the CDC group focused on viral gut diseases.

Adenovirus infections are not systematically tracked in the U.S., so it's not clear if there's been some recent surge in virus activity. In fact, adenoviruses are so common that researchers aren't sure what to make of their presence in these cases.

"If we start testing everybody for the adenovirus, they will find so many kids" that have it, said Dr. Heli Bhatt, a pediatric gastroenterologist who treated two Minnesota children with the liver problems.

One was a child who came in nearly five months ago with liver failure. Doctors couldn't figure why. Unfortunately, "not having a cause is something that happens," Bhatt said. Roughly a third of acute liver failure cases go unexplained, experts have estimated.

Bhatt said the second child she saw got sick last month. By that time, health officials had been drawing attention to cases, and she and other doctors began going back and reviewing unexplained illnesses since October.

Indeed, many cases added to the tally in the last few weeks were not recent illnesses but rather earlier ones that were re-evaluated. About 10% of the U.S. cases occurred in May, Butler said. The rate seems to be relatively flat since the fall, he added.

It's possible that doctors are merely discovering a phenomenon that's been going on for years, some scientists said.

Another possible explanation: COVID-19.

The CDC recently estimated that, as of February, 75% of U.S. children had been infected by the coronavirus.

Only 10% to 15% of the children with the mysterious hepatitis had COVID-19, according to nasal swab tests given when they checked into a hospital, health officials say.

But investigators are wondering about previous coronavirus infections. It's possible that coronavirus particles lurking in the gut are playing a role, said Petter Brodin, a pediatric immunologist at Imperial College London.

In a piece earlier this month in the medical journal *Lancet*, Brodin and another scientist suggested that a combination of lingering coronavirus and an adenovirus infection could trigger a liver-damaging immune system reaction.

"I think it's an unfortunate combination of circumstances that could explain this," Brodin told the AP.

	<p>Butler said researchers have seen complex reactions like that before, and investigators are discussing ways to better check out the hypothesis.</p> <p>He said it was “not out of the realm of plausibility, at all.”</p> <p>A Case Western Reserve University preprint study, which has yet to be peer reviewed, suggested children who had COVID-19 had a significantly higher risk of liver damage.</p> <p>Dr. Markus Buchfellner, a pediatric infectious diseases doctor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, was involved in the identification of the first U.S. cases in the fall.</p> <p>The illnesses were “weird” and concerning, he said. Six months later, “we don’t really know exactly what we’re dealing with.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Michigan mink coronavirus mystery</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/health/coronavirus-mink-michigan-spillover.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/health/coronavirus-mink-michigan-spillover.html</a>
GIST	<p>In late September of 2020, captive mink on a farm in Michigan suddenly fell ill. They stopped eating, struggled to breathe and bled from the nose, <a href="#">according to a report</a> from the World Organization for Animal Health. Two thousand animals died.</p> <p>Laboratory testing <a href="#">soon confirmed</a> that the mink were infected with the coronavirus.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention dispatched a team of outbreak investigators, who collaborated with other agencies to swab mink, farm workers and a menagerie of other animals, from rats to raccoons, to determine how the virus had spread.</p> <p>“We tried to leave no stone unturned,” said Dr. Casey Barton Behravesh, who directs the C.D.C.’s One Health Office.</p> <p>Last month, <a href="#">the C.D.C. confirmed</a> that four Michigan residents, including two farm employees, had been infected with the same unique coronavirus variant that was found in the mink. It was the first, and so far only, known instance of possible animal-to-human transmission in the United States.</p> <p>But many questions remain: When, and in whom, did the variant first emerge? How did a taxidermist with no connection to the farm contract it? Could there be a link between the Michigan mink outbreak and a white-tailed deer variant that scientists recently discovered in neighboring Ontario?</p> <p>“It really feels very much like a puzzle,” said Dr. Samira Mubareka, a virologist at Sunnybrook Research Institute and the University of Toronto. “It’s not just pieces that are missing — it’s contiguous, interlocking pieces that are missing.”</p> <p>Since the early days of the pandemic, when the coronavirus tore through fur farms, scientists have worried that mink might become a long-term reservoir for the virus and a potential source of new variants.</p> <p>To date, coronavirus infections have been detected in mink on 18 American farms, the most recent in Wisconsin in February. Even as Congress considers a ban on mink farming, there is still no national system for proactive surveillance on mink farms, which are not required to report cases to federal authorities. And officials have not released much information about the outbreak investigations they have conducted; some of those details are reported here for the first time.</p> <p>Together, the secrecy and spotty surveillance make it difficult to determine how much of a risk mink farms pose, scientists say. And it threatens to leave experts blind to the emergence of worrisome new variants that could spill back into humans, extending the pandemic.</p>

“Combined with a desperate need for better more systematic surveillance in humans and animals, we could really benefit from increased transparency regarding spillover and spillback risk,” said Vivek Kapur, a veterinary microbiologist at Penn State University.

### **The investigation**

The Netherlands and Denmark were the first countries to report mink farm outbreaks, in the spring and summer of 2020. Scientists pieced together an unsettling chain of events: It appeared that humans had transmitted the virus to mink; that the virus had mutated as it moved among the mink, and that the animals [then spread the altered virus](#) back to humans.

“All of that jumping back and forth over the fence is what we saw,” said Dr. Marion Koopmans, a virologist at Erasmus University Medical Center in Rotterdam. “And that’s something that, as a virologist, you don’t really like.”

The Netherlands and Denmark took “quick and decisive” action, said Adriana Diaz, a doctoral student at the University of London who [studied these responses](#). Dutch authorities conducted antibody testing on all farms and required farmers to report respiratory symptoms in mink and regularly submit carcasses for examination. Still, the virus proved difficult to control, and both nations ultimately [shuttered their mink farms](#).

The United States took a different tack, [developing a set of voluntary guidelines](#) to help farmers keep the virus at bay, including asking farm workers to wear masks and notifying authorities of suspected cases.

But there was no national screening program and federal officials relied upon farm owners to self-report outbreaks. “All of our federal surveillance efforts are voluntary,” said Dr. Tracey Dutcher, the science and biodefense coordinator for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service at the United States Department of Agriculture.

The C.D.C. investigated outbreaks only when officially invited. Some owners of affected farms declined to participate, and field teams only performed on-site investigations on eight farms, Dr. Barton Behravesh said.

On the Michigan farm, C.D.C. investigators worked with the U.S.D.A. and state agencies to test humans and animals for the virus. They collected swabs and samples from 159 mink on the farm; all but two were actively infected, Dr. Barton Behravesh said.

None of the other animals tested around the farm — two dogs, a cat, raccoons, opossums, striped skunks, rats, groundhogs and rabbits — were infected, but one dog tested positive for antibodies, officials said.

Two of the farm’s employees were infected with the same version of the virus that was spreading among the mink. The variant had two mutations that had also been found in farmed mink in Europe and in people connected to mink farms.

Officials found the same mutations in a sample collected from another Michigan resident nearly two months after the mink outbreak and then in a fourth person connected to that resident. The third case [was a local taxidermist](#), according to internal health department emails obtained by the Documenting Covid-19 Project and the Detroit Free Press, and [the fourth case was the man’s wife](#), the organizations later reported. (Michigan’s Department of Health & Human Services declined to confirm these details for privacy reasons.) Neither had any known connection to the mink farm.

### **Unanswered questions**

These findings suggest a likely scenario, experts said: A person passed the virus to the mink, and the mutations emerged as the virus spread among the animals, which then transmitted them back to the farm workers. “We concluded that there was likely mink-to-person spread on this particular Michigan farm,” Dr. Barton Behravesh said.



But determining when, and in whom, the mutations first appeared requires many more virus samples from farm workers, local residents and mink, collected before and after the outbreak. “That data doesn’t exist,” said Arinjay Banerjee, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan.

Throughout 2020, testing was difficult for Americans to access and few patient samples were being sequenced. Surveillance in animals was even worse; [until this spring](#), federal officials explicitly recommended against routinely testing animals for the virus.

“Widespread testing wasn’t available, then there became a shortage of certain supplies,” Dr. Behravesch said. “So we didn’t want there to be, you know, a mad rush to test animals.”

Without more samples, it’s impossible to rule out the possibility that the variant emerged in humans, who then spread it to mink, scientists said.

A bigger puzzle is how the taxidermist and his wife got it. The most likely possibility, several experts said, is that the variant was circulating more widely in the human population than was known, and the couple caught it from another infected person.

Another, more speculative, possibility is that they picked up the variant from another animal species. “Taxidermists deal with other dead animals,” said Linda Saif, a virologist and immunologist at Ohio State University.

But because the cases were detected “weeks to months” after the two fell ill, testing any animals they may have been in contact with “was either not feasible or not indicated,” said Lynn Sutfin, a spokesperson for the Michigan D.H.H.S.

The pair also had close contact with deer while hunting “on or very near to their own illness onset dates,” according to [the health department emails](#) obtained by the Documenting Covid-19 Project and the Free Press.

Studies suggest that humans have repeatedly [introduced the virus to white-tailed deer](#), which then transmit it easily among themselves. People could have passed the mink variant to deer, which might have transmitted it to the taxidermist and his wife. “Given the very high viral burdens that have been noted in white-tailed deer, the spillover to them could certainly have occurred from the deer,” Dr. Kapur said.

Alternately, deer might have picked up the virus directly from infected mink, which have been known to escape from farms. Feral cats on mink farms [have also tested positive for the virus](#) and may act as vectors between captive mink and wildlife.

Or deer might come into contact with mink farm waste, Dr. Kapur said. On farms with outbreaks, airborne dust, as well as the straw and hay that the mink bed down on, [can be highly contaminated](#) with virus, Dutch researchers found.

Another finding makes a potential deer link intriguing, scientists said. Canadian researchers recently detected [a unique coronavirus variant circulating in deer](#) in southwestern Ontario. Although the deer variant was strikingly different from other known variants, the closest matches were viral samples collected from people and mink in Michigan in late 2020.

One possibility, still theoretical, is that whatever version of the virus was circulating among mink and humans made its way into deer, where it evolved into a new variant. “There could be interactions and interspecies transmission that have been cryptic and we haven’t really picked up on,” said Dr. Mubareka, an author of the Ontario study.

Dr. Banerjee was skeptical that deer played a role in the case of the taxidermist and his wife. “I think that’s just speculation at best,” he said. But he acknowledged that the data are so sparse that many possibilities remain. “Are there other animals we are missing?” he asked.

### Missed opportunities

Even the data that exist are not always clear-cut. As part of another investigation in the fall of 2020, the U.S.D.A. tested a dozen cattle on a Wisconsin mink farm with a coronavirus outbreak. Although the cattle tested negative for the virus, three had low levels of antibodies, said Travis Weger, a U.S.D.A. spokesperson.

However, these findings “did not meet the criteria for a positive result,” Mr. Weger said in an email, and could have been triggered by antibodies to other coronaviruses known to infect cattle. Experimental studies suggest that cattle are not susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, he added.

Still, outside experts said that it is difficult to draw conclusions without more analysis — and that the findings suggest a need to monitor livestock, especially as new variants emerge.

Some also expressed concern that officials have not disclosed these and other findings from the mink investigations.

Dr. Barton Behravesh, of the C.D.C., said that the viral sequences obtained during the investigations are available on GISAID, a repository of viral genomes, and that more details would eventually be published in scientific journals.

The U.S.D.A. is using funding from the American Rescue Plan to ramp up animal surveillance and would like to do more active monitoring on mink farms, Dr. Dutcher said: “We’re still working through some of the questions and conversations with industry.”

Although the U.S.D.A has no reports of active outbreaks after 2020, mink infections can be silent. Researchers found antibodies in mink on a Wisconsin farm in February 2022 and on a farm in another, unnamed state in May 2021. There was no evidence of symptomatic outbreaks on either farm, which had supplied samples from healthy animals for research, Mr. Weger said in an email.

But the presence of antibodies suggests that the virus spread on the farms undetected.

“Without surveillance, how would you know?” said Dr. Jim Keen, the director of veterinary sciences at the Center for a Humane Economy, a nonprofit animal welfare organization that supports banning mink farming in the United States.

Some mink herds have now been vaccinated, which might help slow transmission on farms. But vaccination could make infections more likely to be asymptomatic, Dr. Keen said.

The United States should be regularly testing both mink and farm employees, sequencing positive samples and communicating the results in a timely way, Ms. Diaz said.

As new variants emerge, some perhaps capable of infecting new species, ongoing surveillance is needed to understand the “web of transmission that may be going on with wildlife, farmed animals and humans,” Dr. Saif said. “If you don’t look for something, you’re not going to find it.”

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HEADLINE	05/20 Study: global climate heating cutting sleep
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/20/global-heating-cutting-sleep-study-health-impacts">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/20/global-heating-cutting-sleep-study-health-impacts</a>
GIST	<p>Rising temperatures driven by the climate crisis are cutting the sleep of people across the world, the largest study to date has found.</p> <p>Good sleep is critical to health and wellbeing. But global heating is <a href="#">increasing night-time temperatures</a>, even faster than in the day, making it harder to sleep. The analysis revealed that the average global citizen</p>

is already losing 44 hours of sleep a year, leading to 11 nights with less than seven hours' sleep, a standard benchmark of sufficient sleep.

Lost sleep will increase further as the [planet continues to heat](#) but it affects some groups much more than others. The sleep loss per degree of warming is about a quarter higher for women than men, twice as high for those over 65 years old and three times higher for those in less affluent nations. The researchers used data from sleep-tracking wristbands used by 47,000 people over 7 million nights and across 68 countries.

Previous studies have shown that rising temperatures damage health, including increased heart attacks, suicides and [mental health crises](#), and accidents and injuries, as well as reducing the ability to work. Poor sleep has also been shown to have these effects and the researchers said their study suggests that disturbed sleep may be a key mechanism by which heat causes these health impacts. Worryingly, the researchers said, their data showed no signs of people being able to adapt to hotter nights.

"For most of us, sleep is a very familiar part of our daily routine; we spend nearly a third of our lives asleep," said Kelton Minor, at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and who led the research. "But growing numbers of people in many countries around the world do not sleep enough."

"In this study, we provide the first planetary-scale evidence that warmer than average temperatures erode human sleep," he said. "It might actually be the tip of the iceberg, because it's very likely our estimates are conservative."

Minor said sleep reduced by warmer nights is affecting huge populations. For example, he said, a night above 25C in a city of a million people would result in 46,000 extra people suffering from shorter sleep.

"And if you look at the heatwave that's transpiring [right now in India and Pakistan](#), we're talking about billions of individuals exposed to conditions expected to result in considerable sleep loss," Minor said.

The study, [published in the journal One Earth](#), analysed sleep and outdoor weather data collected from 2015 to 2017 and found that higher temperatures reduced sleep by delaying its onset. People's bodies [need to cool every night](#) as they fall asleep, but this is harder when it is warmer.

Women may be affected more because their bodies usually cool faster than men's when going to sleep. Women also have higher levels of subcutaneous fat on average, making cooling slower. Older people are known to sleep less at night and have poorer body temperature regulation, which may explain their susceptibility. People in poorer nations could lose more sleep as they have less access to cooling features such as window shutters, fans and air conditioning.

The researchers found the impact of warmer nights on sleep was seen in all countries, whether they had naturally cooler or warmer climates, with the impact clear when night-time temperatures rose above 10C.

"Worryingly, we also found evidence that people already living in warmer climates experienced greater sleep erosion per degree of temperature rise," said Minor. "We had expected those individuals to be better adapted." Furthermore, people did not catch up on missed sleep at later times, according to the data.

Minor said the research had important implications for policymakers, who needed to ensure cities, towns and buildings were well adapted to heat in order to reduce the health impacts of rising temperatures. The UK government's official advisers warned in 2021 that it was [failing to protect people from the fast-rising risks](#) of the climate crisis, particularly heatwaves.

The data used in the study came mainly from richer nations, although it included some from India, China, Colombia and South Africa. The wristbands also tended to be worn by people less prone to sleep disturbance by warmer temperatures, such as middle-aged, wealthier men.

"Lower-income people are underrepresented in the data and we're very transparent about that," said Minor. He said further research was needed, particularly in places that already ranked as among the hottest

	<p>in the world, such as large parts of Africa, Central America and the Middle East. The research was unable to assess sleep quality, such as the different phases of sleep, but there was no change in the number of times people woke in the night.</p> <p>Minor said the path the world chose in terms of how hot the planet got would have consequences for everyone's slumber.</p> <p>"Our decisions, collectively as societies, will have costs in terms of sleep."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Calif. alarm: invasive jumping worms</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/21/invasive-jumping-worms-amyntas-agrestis-california">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/21/invasive-jumping-worms-amyntas-agrestis-california</a>
GIST	<p>An invasive worm species known for its "voracious appetite" and ability to jump a foot in the air is raising alarm in <a href="#">California</a>, where scientists have expressed concerns about the threat the worms pose to forest ecosystems.</p> <p>The <i>Amyntas agrestis</i>, also known as the Asian jumping worm, Alabama jumper or crazy snake worm, have been spotted in California in recent months. The earthworm is native to east Asia, particularly to Japan and the Korean peninsula. However, in recent years the worms made their way to North America via various landscape plants that have been imported from the region.</p> <p>Initially spotted in Wisconsin and across the New England area in 2013, the worms have spread westward into dozens of states, and were first seen in California's Napa county in July.</p> <p>The worms, which can grow up to 8in in length and have a milky white band around their dark body, are distinctive for their theatrical behavior, including wild movements and even <a href="#">detaching body parts</a>. They're also hermaphrodites and can reproduce without mating, and produce cocoons at the soil surface.</p> <p>"These earthworms are extremely active, aggressive, and have voracious appetites," California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) warned in a <a href="#">report</a>. "True to their name, they jump and thrash immediately when handled, behaving more like a threatened snake than a worm, sometimes even breaking and shedding their tail when caught."</p> <p>Of greater concern, however, is the worms' impact on the environment. Jumping worms can destroy a forest ecosystem by chewing through fallen leaves, in turn destroying the top layer of forest soil upon which many plants and organisms depend.</p> <p>"They are destructive and cause severe damage to hardwood forests, especially those consisting of maple, basswood, red oak, poplar or birch species that rely on thick layers of leaf litter that serve as rooting medium," according to the CDFA report, which notes that the "voracious feeders" can devour a cover of organic material in "two to five years".</p> <p>"Soil is the foundation of life – and Asian jumping worms change it. In fact, earthworms can have such huge impacts that they're able to actually reengineer the ecosystems around them," Mac Callahan, a Forest Service researcher specializing in soils, said in a forest service blogpost.</p> <p>Experts have recommended several <a href="#">strategies</a> to detect and eliminate the worms, including using a mustard pour - a mixture consisting of water and yellow mustard seeds - over soil to drive out any worms to the surface, and covering moistened soil with a sheet of transparent polyethylene for two to three weeks until soil temperature exceeds 104F for at least three days, destroying the worm's cocoons.</p> <p>Another strategy to eliminate the worms is to bag them and throw them in the trash, or place them in a bag and leave them out in the sun for at least 10 minutes before discarding the bag.</p>

	<p>Experts have also advised people to take steps to prevent the worms from spreading in the first place. The USDA has warned that because the worms live in soil, they can easily spread in mulch, potting mixes or potted plants.</p> <p>Additionally, raking or blowing leaves can spread earthworms or their egg sacs.</p> <p>When certain municipalities collect fallen leaves from local residents and then return it in the form of compost, this can also help spread the worms.</p> <p>The CDFA has <a href="#">warned</a> that the worms will likely be “able to establish a widespread distribution through California’s forest habitat and ornamental production sites particularly in residential and commercial environments.”</p> <p>“If these worms didn’t spread into forests and natural areas, they wouldn’t be such a problem,” <a href="#">said</a> Callaham. “But unfortunately, they simply won’t stay where you put them. The best way to prevent future invasions is to avoid moving earthworms around.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 WHO: monkeypox could spike over summer</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/21/new-york-city-resident-monkeypox-virus-positive">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/21/new-york-city-resident-monkeypox-virus-positive</a>
GIST	<p>A senior adviser for the World Health Organization has said the monkeypox outbreak seems to be spreading through sexual contact, and warned that case numbers could spike over the summer months as people attend major summer gatherings and festivals.</p> <p>David Heymann, chair of the WHO’s Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Infectious Hazards with Pandemic and Epidemic Potential, led a meeting of the group on Friday “because of the urgency of the situation”.</p> <p>Heymann told Reuters the WHO is working on the theory that cases so far identified were driven by sexual contact.</p> <p>“What seems to be happening now is that it has got into the population as a sexual form, as a genital form, and is being spread, as are sexually transmitted infections, which has amplified its transmission around the world,” Heymann said.</p> <p>Heymann, a professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said experts were likely to give more guidance to countries in the coming days. Health officials in several countries have warned that cases could rise further over the summer.</p> <p>Heymann said the monkeypox outbreak did not resemble the early days of Covid because it does not transmit as easily. “There are vaccines available, but the most important message is: you can protect yourself,” he said.</p> <p>The warning comes as a New York City resident has tested positive for the virus that causes monkeypox, health officials said, with the federal Centers for Disease Control investigating to determine whether the rare disease is actually present.</p> <p>Officials are treating the case as positive, and they have placed the patient – whose identity was not released – in isolation as they awaited final confirmation of the test result from the CDC.</p> <p>The notification came a day after authorities in New York City said they were investigating two potential cases. One of those potential cases in the city was ruled out, the state health department said.</p> <p>City epidemiologists have begun contacting people who may have been exposed to the person infected with Orthopoxvirus, the family of viruses that includes monkeypox. State and city officials have said they will try to determine how the New York patient was infected.</p>

The virus comes from wild animals, including rodents and primates, but can occasionally transfer to humans – with most of those cases traced to central and west Africa. The first known human infection dates back to 1970, when a nine-year-old boy in a remote part of DR Congo was diagnosed with the virus, which can cause fever, body aches, chills and fatigue.

People with severe cases can also develop rash and pus-filled lesions on the face, palms of the hands and other body parts.

The virus does not spread easily between people, though officials have said transmission can occur through contact with body fluids, monkeypox sores, items that have been contaminated with fluids or sores such as clothing and bedding, or through respiratory droplets following prolonged face-to-face contact.

The apparent infection in New York comes as the WHO has identified about 80 cases globally, along with roughly 50 more suspected cases. The WHO warned more cases are likely to emerge.

Infections have been confirmed in nine European countries, as well as the US, Canada and Australia.

Health officials in Massachusetts confirmed its first case of the disease on Wednesday. Officials in the state have said the patient recently traveled to Canada.

“The current patient is of no public health risk right now,” Dr Paul Biddinger, director of the Center for Disaster Medicine at Massachusetts general hospital said on Thursday. “People should just be aware of symptoms, but not be afraid in any way.”

Cases of monkeypox periodically show in the US. Last year, Texas and Maryland each reported a case in people who had recently traveled to Nigeria. In 2003, there was a six-state outbreak that infected 47 people.

“Monkeypox is not a monkey virus,” D. Matt Aliota, head of the University of Minnesota’s Program of Zoonotic Viral Infections, told Minnesota’s Karel 11 last week. “It was originally isolated out of a monkey, but monkeys aren’t the natural host.

“It’s a virus that naturally infects small rodents and can then jump to humans through scratches or hunting and processing of meat.”

In recent days, clinicians have been advised to treat patients with related symptoms as a “possible diagnosis” and to consult their state health department or the CDC’s Emergency Operations Center “as soon as monkeypox is suspected”.

The advisory also gives infection control information to healthcare providers.

Health officials have also made it a point to note that the monkeypox is harder to transmit – and therefore easier to contain – than the coronavirus.

People who are exposed to monkeypox, which has a slow incubation period, can be given smallpox vaccines already in circulation to curb the severity of the sickness, according to the CDC.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/20 King Co. court: 5,000 felony cases backlog
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/king-county-judges-attorneys-and-corrections-officers-are-all-feeling-the-strain-from-a-historic-backlog-of-criminal-cases/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/king-county-judges-attorneys-and-corrections-officers-are-all-feeling-the-strain-from-a-historic-backlog-of-criminal-cases/</a>



Matt Lapin spent the first dozen years of his legal career as a deputy prosecutor — and the last dozen as a private criminal defense attorney.

He was officially sworn in as the newest member of the King County Superior Court bench earlier this month, becoming the 11th judge to don black robes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lapin's criminal trial experience is a boon for the 54-member bench as judges, attorneys and jail corrections officers struggle to address an unprecedented pileup of criminal cases caused by slowdowns in court operations, a result of the pandemic. At the same time, an ongoing spike in violent crime continues to feed new cases into the legal system, whose players are also contending with staffing challenges and experience gaps affecting how quickly cases are resolved through trials or plea agreements.

At the height of the pandemic, the county had more than 6,000 pending felony cases, nearly double its historical average. That number now stands at about 4,800.

But Dan Clark, King County's chief criminal deputy prosecutor, said that while the sheer number of cases is troubling, the seriousness of the alleged crimes is also cause for concern. Before the pandemic, two-thirds of the felony cases filed by prosecutors were for less serious crimes, like burglaries and car thefts, with violent crimes against people making up the remainder, Clark said.

Now violent crimes account for more than half of new felony case filings, he said, while the number of cases resolved through plea agreements has dropped precipitously.

The backlog includes more than 230 murder cases and 500 sexual assault cases, and it's expected to take years for all of them to be adjudicated.

In his transition from advocate to judge, Lapin said his new job is to make sure the parties that come before him get a fair trial and feel the system works.

"It's very daunting," Lapin, 53, said of the criminal case backlog. "I have a tremendous learning curve in a lot of areas, but on the criminal side, I can hit the ground running."

### **Winnowing backlog an urgent priority**

Lapin is among a wave of new superior court judges who will play key roles in resolving the county's backlog of criminal cases.

Thirty-two other judges have been sworn in over the last five years, and a handful of judges have temporarily come out of retirement to help move cases along.

Their mission of tackling the backlog is about ensuring access to justice, said Presiding Judge Patrick Oishi.

"We have defendants who've been in custody a long time and alleged victims who've been waiting for their day in court for a long time," he said. "That's why it's an urgent priority."

While other courts across the region and country shut down during the pandemic, King County Superior Court — which handles a wide range of criminal, civil and family law matters — slowed operations but never completely closed.

Civil trials were temporarily moved to the Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue, and virtual appearances and hearings became commonplace. Family law matters, for example, are now addressed exclusively via video.

But criminal trials must be heard in person at the county's Seattle and Kent courthouses for security reasons — and to protect defendants' constitutional rights and maintain chain of custody of evidence.



COVID-19 protocols compelled court officials to suspend criminal jury trials three times — for roughly 10 months total — and some safety measures remain in place as trials begin to ramp back up.

For each jury trial, two courtrooms are still needed: One for the trial itself and a second to serve as a jury room to give jurors space to spread out during breaks and deliberations.

The reduced capacity in both King County courthouses means priority is being given to the oldest cases — mostly from 2018 onward — involving violent crimes like murder, rape, armed robbery and assault. Masks still must be worn in courtrooms but are now optional in hallways and other public areas.

Perhaps the biggest enduring change is that voir dire — where attorneys question prospective jurors before selecting a panel — is being conducted remotely. Pre-pandemic, as many as 400 people would respond to jury summons and spend two days at the courthouse, waiting to see if they would be assigned to participate in voir dire for an upcoming trial.

Now, prospective jurors report via Zoom for two hours, eliminating the cost and inconvenience of taking days off from work, arranging child care, traveling to the courthouse and paying for parking and meals.

Since jurors are still only paid \$10 a day — a rate that's gone unchanged since the 1950s — many judges see remote voir dire as a way to involve more people in the criminal legal process while also showing greater respect for their time.

Only jurors who are selected are required to show up at court once a criminal trial gets underway.

"It takes a lot more time to do a lot less," said Judge John Ruhl, who retired at the end of April and was replaced by Lapin. "There's always a glitch electronically or a juror who can't get connected."

That said, "jury selection is a wonderful thing now for jurors," said Ruhl, even though remote voir dire adds several days to trials for attorneys, bailiffs and judges because only 20 prospective jurors can be questioned at a time.

Lapin, who represented defendants in a rape and two murder trials before becoming a pro tem judge in November, said remotely selecting jurors resulted in "some of the most diverse juries I've ever seen," with more jurors of color and a greater range of ages participating in the process.

"It's so much more convenient for [prospective jurors] to show up, and it's less of a hardship," he said.

### **Attorneys face massive caseloads**

Deputy prosecutors and public defenders are also shouldering the weight of the criminal case backlog.

Clark, the chief criminal deputy prosecutor, and Gordon Hill, the deputy director of the King County Department of Public Defense, both said their most experienced trial attorneys are juggling unprecedented caseloads.

Attorneys left both law offices during the pandemic, and court slowdowns kept less experienced attorneys from getting the experience they need to handle the most serious criminal cases.

Though prosecutors and public defenders received millions of dollars in COVID-19 relief funds last year and are using some of the money to help fill their ranks, it's been tough to attract attorneys with criminal law experience, Clark and Hill said.

"Private law firms are also hiring, and they can offer much more competitive salaries than we can," Clark said. "Especially in King County, with housing prices the way they are, it is really hard to attract new attorneys into these positions."

Before the pandemic, 80% to 90% of criminal cases ended with plea agreements, far outnumbering the 300 cases that go before a jury each year, Clark said. But for reasons that aren't fully understood, the number of people entering guilty pleas has dropped off considerably from the pre-pandemic average of 350 a month.

"We have not yet gotten a single month where our resolutions are at or above our historic average, which means that every single month, we have added to that backlog," Clark said.

At the same time, prosecutors nationwide are dealing with fallout from the spike in violent crime seen during the pandemic, he said.

"It's not just that there are more cases in the system, it's that there are more serious cases in the system than ever before," Clark said. "It's concerning, to say the least."

Crime also continues to be a problem near the Seattle courthouse.

Chief Criminal Judge Karen Donohue said someone used a golf club to smash most of the courthouse's street-level windows along Fourth Avenue a few weeks ago and that a man was recently stabbed nearby.

And while security concerns were somewhat abated after a large homeless encampment was removed from the park next to the courthouse in August, Donohue said open-air drug dealing continues at Prefontaine Plaza across Third Avenue.

That's made it difficult to get interpreters back in court, she said, "because of the perceptions and safety issues in coming back downtown."

### **Backlog reverberates in jails**

People who have remained in jail as they wait for their criminal cases to be resolved are spending up to 23 hours a day in isolation because of the long-running staffing shortage at the county's two jails, Hill said.

Interpreters have not returned to making in-person jail visits, creating communication barriers for attorneys and some of their clients, he said. Rules limiting jail visits by defense investigators and mitigation specialists, who assess clients and help develop defense strategies, have also slowed cases down, Hill said.

Meanwhile, jail visiting booths also have not reopened for attorneys to meet with their clients, and while there have been opportunities for phone and video consultations, those conversations aren't confidential, he said.

"Without that, it's very difficult to move cases forward," Hill said, noting that attorney-client confidentiality is a basic tenet of the criminal legal system. "So the jail staffing problems have reverberated almost exponentially in our office."

The King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention has the budget for 503 corrections officers and 40 sergeants, but as of January, 90-some officer positions and three sergeant positions were unfilled.

Corrections officers, who are frequently required to work mandatory double shifts, each received a \$4,000 retention bonus earlier this year. The department is hiring new officers, but "we still have more people going out the door than coming in," said Dennis Folk, president of the King County Corrections Guild.

As criminal jury trials have ramped up, the staffing shortage has added to the strain, since one to four corrections officers are needed per trial to escort defendants to and from court and provide security during trials and hearings.

Those officers typically have at least 15 years of experience, are certified to carry guns and have received additional training in de-escalation tactics and the use of less-lethal weapons, Noah Haglund, a DAJD spokesperson, said in an email.

Folk, who typically books people into the jail at the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent, said he and another bookings officer, plus two other officers from the training division, were recently reassigned to boost the court detail and provide security for two murder trials that started this week.

During what is supposed to be a two-week reassignment, Folk said the RJC's booking desk will be closed, which means law enforcement officers who make felony arrests in the county's south end will have to drive to downtown Seattle to book people into the King County Jail.

With more murder trials on the horizon, Folk said he's pressing jail commanders to come up with a permanent plan to provide adequate coverage for the court detail.

"It's a huge mess," he said. "You're putting a Band-Aid on an arterial problem."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 DOJ steps up hate crime prosecutions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220521-doj-steps-up-hate-crime-prosecutions">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220521-doj-steps-up-hate-crime-prosecutions</a>
GIST	<p>With hate crimes on the rise, U.S. federal prosecutors have charged more than 40 people with bias-motivated crimes since January 2021, obtaining over 35 convictions, the Justice Department said Friday.</p> <p>Among those convicted were three white men found guilty by a jury in February in connection with the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a young man who was jogging in Brunswick, Georgia, in 2020.</p> <p>The department released the figures as officials marked the first anniversary of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act and announced new measures to combat hate crimes. The law required the Justice Department to speed up a review of hate crime cases.</p> <p>The announcement comes less than a week after an 18-year-old gunman was charged with killing 10 people and injuring three others at a supermarket in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Buffalo, New York. The Justice Department is investigating the shooting as a hate crime and an act of racially motivated violent extremism.</p> <p>"No one in this country should have to fear the threat of hate-fueled violence," Attorney General Merrick Garland said during a ceremony at the Justice Department. "The Justice Department will continue to use every resource at its disposal to confront unlawful acts of hate, and to hold accountable those who perpetrate them."</p> <p>The number of reported hate crime prosecutions is up compared to recent years. A 2021 <a href="#">Bureau of Justice Statistics study</a> found that federal prosecutors had charged an average of about 21 defendants and obtained an average of 19 hate crime convictions per year over a 15-year period.</p> <p>Under the Trump administration, the Justice Department faced criticism for deprioritizing civil rights enforcement. Trump administration officials rebutted the charge, with the Justice Department's top civil rights official stating in January 2021 that his division had brought the highest number of <a href="#">hate crime charges</a> during Trump's final year in office.</p> <p>He did not provide a number. A Justice Department spokesperson did not respond to a VOA request for figures on hate crime prosecutions during the Trump administration.</p> <p>Federal law makes it a crime to target a victim because of their race, gender or gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity. Criminal offenses prosecuted as hate crimes range from acts of violence to damage to a religious property.</p>

Most hate crimes are prosecuted at the state and local level, and federal prosecutors bring charges in exceptional circumstances. In fact, the [vast majority of hate crime cases](#) referred to the Justice Department do not get prosecuted.

A hate crime conviction carries harsh penalties. But hate crimes are difficult to prosecute. To obtain a conviction, prosecutors must prove that the defendant was motivated by bias and not simply that the victim belonged to a protected class.

Last year, hate crimes in 37 major U.S. cities increased by nearly 39%, with attacks on Asian and Jewish Americans accounting for the bulk of the increase, according to police data compiled by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

In response to the surge in incidents, the Justice Department last year appointed an anti-hate crimes coordinator, tasked a top prosecutor to expedite a review of hate crime cases, and designated a civil rights coordinator in every U.S. attorney's office in the country.

In addition, Garland said the department is making use of its non-criminal tools to combat hate crimes. Along with the Department of Health and Human services, the Justice Department is issuing new guidance aimed at raising awareness of hate crimes and hate incidents; releasing \$10 million in grant solicitations for new programs to create state-run hotlines and support community groups; and hiring the department's first ever language access coordinator.

"We know that language access is a key barrier to the reporting of hate crimes and hate incidents ... and (the new official) will help improve knowledge, use, and expansion of the Department of Justice's language resources," Garland said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Mexico court rules migrant checks illegal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/mexico-migrant-checks-racist-illegal-supreme-court">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/22/mexico-migrant-checks-racist-illegal-supreme-court</a>
GIST	<p>Mexican immigration agents can no longer conduct stop and search operations on buses and highways after the country's supreme court ruled that such checks are racist, discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional.</p> <p>The landmark ruling, handed down in Mexico City on Wednesday, found in favour of three young Indigenous Mexicans who were detained and abused by immigration (INM) officials in 2015 during a US-backed crackdown.</p> <p>The siblings – aged 15 to 24 – were on a bus of seasonal farmhands in Querétaro, central Mexico, when apprehended by agents who targeted them because of their physical features, clothes and limited Spanish.</p> <p>The agents accused them of being undocumented immigrants from neighbouring Guatemala, but they were Indigenous Tzeltal Mayans from the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico, where 25% of the population speak an Indigenous language.</p> <p>Shortly after the ordeal, the Guardian revealed how the sisters, Amy and Esther, and their brother were taken to a detention centre and held illegally for eight days. Alberto, then aged 18, was beaten and given electric shocks until he agreed to sign a deportation document written in Spanish admitting they were Guatemalan, even though he cannot read or write.</p> <p>After considering the case, the supreme court ruled that the 2011 immigration reforms allowing agents to stop and search anyone anywhere in Mexico are unconstitutional – because the discretionary powers rely on agents identifying undocumented migrants based on their race, skin color, physical appearance and language spoken.</p>

	<p>The law is therefore discriminatory, violating equality legislation and the right to move freely within Mexico.</p> <p>“The decision represents an opportunity to stop the discriminatory and racist practices by immigration authorities and the national guard who utilize racial profiling to detect migrants, that have led to arbitrary detentions of both immigrants and Mexicans,” said Gretchen Kuhner, director of the Institute for Women in Migration which helped bring the case.</p> <p>The overland passage through Mexico is one of the most dangerous migration corridors in the world. In addition to the threat posed by criminal networks, tens of thousands of people are detained every year during stop and search operations, with widespread reports of abuses such as bribes, kidnap and sexual assault involving immigration agents and security forces.</p> <p>Immigration checkpoints have spread across the country since 2014, as part of a bilateral US-Mexico plan to stop migrants reaching the US southern border. The measures have caused widespread misery but done little to stop asylum seekers and migrants trying to reach the US.</p> <p>“The checkpoints don’t stop migrants anyway, who are coming [to the US] in record numbers,” said Adam Isacson, a borders and security expert at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). “All they do is force migrants into more remote areas where organised crime preys upon them, while providing corrupt migration agents an illegal income stream in exchange for waving migrants through.”</p> <p>Wednesday’s ruling calls into question the role of Mexico’s armed forces, especially the national guard – a militarized public security agency created by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador – which has been deployed across the country to assist the INM. According to the court, the INM can only carry out ID checks at ports, airports or land border crossings, and in other limited situations.</p> <p>It comes almost two years after the youngsters received a rare public apology from the government, when the immigration chief admitted they had been subjected to human rights violations as a result of racial profiling. Six agents were suspended for two to four weeks for the abuse.</p> <p>The incident left the youngsters, who narrowly avoided being expelled from their home country after the older sister’s boyfriend alerted human rights workers, traumatised and afraid to leave their community in search of work.</p> <p>“I really thought I was going to die, so I signed lots of sheets of paper – but I can’t read or write so I didn’t know what I was signing,” Alberto told the Guardian through a translator in 2016.</p> <p>The government is yet to comment on the ruling.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/22 Senior IRGC member fatally shot in Tehran</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/asia/iran-revolutionary-guard-killed.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/world/asia/iran-revolutionary-guard-killed.html</a>
GIST	<p>A senior member of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps was assassinated in Tehran on Sunday outside his home, according to a statement by the Guards.</p> <p>The statement identified the man as Col. Sayad Khodayee and said he had fought for years in Syria as part of Iran’s military deployment to “defend the shrine” — a term Iran uses to justify its presence in the war in Syria, and to identify those fighting for the Islamic State. The statement blamed the assassination on foreign “terrorists” affiliated with world powers considered enemies of Iran’s Islamic revolution.</p> <p>Two assassins on motorcycles approached Colonel Khodayee’s car and fired five bullets, state media reported. Photos show a man in the driver’s seat wearing a seatbelt, bleeding from gunshot wounds and slumped behind the wheel in an Iranian-made Kia Pride. Reports said his wife was the first person to find his body.</p>

	<p>Security forces are hunting for the assassins, who escaped, state media reported. The Tehran prosecutor arrived at the scene soon after the attack. The killing took place in daylight on a secure street near Iran's parliament, according to The Associated Press.</p> <p>The assassination comes at a time when the Iran nuclear deal is stalemated because the United States has designated the Guards as a terrorist group. Iran has demanded that the terrorist designation be removed as a condition to revive the deal, and Washington has so far refused.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the killing. But its style echoed previous attacks in Iran by Israel.</p> <p>In November 2020 a top Iranian nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakrizadeh, was assassinated while traveling in a car outside Tehran. An American official and two other intelligence officials later said Israel was behind the killing of Mr. Fakrizadeh, who died after a pickup truck laden with explosives detonated in front of his car, which was then sprayed with bullets. The assassination was one in a series targeting Iranian nuclear scientists dating to 2010, which Iran has blamed on Israel.</p> <p>In August 2020 Al Qaeda's second-in-command, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, was shot and killed in Tehran by Israeli operatives on a motorcycle.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/21 Fall City: attempted student abduction</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/deputies-investigating-attempted-abduction-student-fall-city/Y2QKZGAOMRAIROZS7K7JLGTE4Q/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/deputies-investigating-attempted-abduction-student-fall-city/Y2QKZGAOMRAIROZS7K7JLGTE4Q/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>FALL CITY, Wash. — Deputies in Fall City are investigating reports of an attempted abduction of an elementary school student.</p> <p>The school district said a student had just gotten off the school bus on Redmond-Fall City Road Southeast at around 4 p.m. Wednesday. The student was walking up to their driveway when a man pulled up and tried to grab them.</p> <p>The student was able to run home and tell a parent what happened.</p> <p>Police are working with the school district to review video from the school bus in hope of identifying the suspect.</p> <p>"It shatters you to your core. Hearing about that in your neighborhood," says parent Angela Black.</p> <p>Parents in the community say they're concerned because of other incidents in the Snoqualmie Valley School District this school year.</p> <p>In September, a Twin Falls Middle School student was waiting at the bus stop, when a man tried to lure the boy across the street.</p> <p>A few weeks later, the district says a man chased Chief Kanim Middle School students at cross country practice. The district wrote, "They reported that a man came out from behind a bush and tried to grab a girl's wrist and chased the group. Since the students were running, they got away."</p> <p>A mother of one of the cross country runners tells KIRO 7 that the incident prompted coaches to change their running routes to keep students on campus, unless there were enough volunteers to monitor a different running course.</p> <p>In November, the school district reported a Chief Kanim Middle School student was walking to school when she was approached by a man in a minivan. He then proceeded to follow her and ask her questions.</p>

	<p>The district wrote, “The student called her brother on speakerphone and her brother told the man to leave or they would call the police. The man then drove away.”</p> <p>Following each of these incidents, the King County Sheriff’s Department and local police increased patrols in the area while attempting to locate the individuals.</p> <p>Speaking with KIRO 7 News, a spokesman for the district says they will continue to prioritize the safety of their students, and have worked with law enforcement throughout each investigation. Additionally, they’ve worked to keep parents informed.</p> <p>Parents say they appreciate the district’s transparency and will remain vigilant.</p> <p>“We’re a tight-knit group. We take all of those things very seriously, even if it didn’t happen directly to us, which means that we’ll be looking out for all neighborhood kids,” says Black.</p> <p>“Everybody knows that when something like this happens. So we can all look out for each other,” says parent, Ashley McCann.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/22 Federal Way police: shooting injures teen</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-injured-shooting-federal-way/QIL5JYS6VNCZRGJRVAA763JBYA/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-injured-shooting-federal-way/QIL5JYS6VNCZRGJRVAA763JBYA/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>One person was injured in a shooting in Federal Way on Saturday night, according to the Federal Way Police Department.</p> <p>Police said officers were called to a shooting near Cedar Grove Park at South 333rd Street and 22nd Avenue South.</p> <p>When they arrived, they found a 16-year-old boy with a gunshot wound to his neck.</p> <p>The teen was provided aid and then transported to Harborview Medical Center.</p> <p>Police said he was reported to be in stable condition and that his injuries were non-life-threatening.</p> <p>The police department’s investigation has found that a driver of a car pulled up to the park and a male fired a gun toward a group of people.</p> <p>Police have no suspect information at this time.</p> <p>No other injuries were reported.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/22 Puerto Rico shooting: 5 killed</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/shot-death-public-housing-complex-puerto-rico-84901216">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/shot-death-public-housing-complex-puerto-rico-84901216</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- At least five people were shot to death Sunday night at a public housing complex in Puerto Rico, authorities said.</p> <p>Police spokesman Axel Valencia told The Associated Press that the deaths occurred in the community of Caimito in San Juan, capital of the U.S. territory. He said the group was shot outside the Villa Esperanza housing complex.</p> <p>Valencia said that police had not yet identified the victims and that it wasn't immediately clear why they were targeted.</p> <p>No one had been arrested.</p>



	<p>Last month, police reported that two men were found fatally shot inside an overturned car at the same public housing complex.</p> <p>At least 235 people have been reported killed in the island of 3.2 million so far this year, compared with 234 during the same period of last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/20 Mexico families of 'disappeared' speak out</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/as-mexico-hits-grim-milestone-families-of-the-disappeared-seek-to-be-heard/ar-AAxvxyI">https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/as-mexico-hits-grim-milestone-families-of-the-disappeared-seek-to-be-heard/ar-AAxvxyI</a>
GIST	<p>Families took to WhatsApp to quietly spread word about the demonstration they were planning.</p> <p>They met on a recent Sunday in Mexico City, gathering at a roundabout on Paseo de la Reforma, the capital's signature boulevard.</p> <p>A tree that had stood in the traffic circle, the Glorieta de la Palma, for a century had recently been removed. Soon the soil was studded with dozens of portraits.</p> <p>They were faces of some of Mexico's "disappeared," people who walked out of their houses or offices one day to go about their lives and were never seen again.</p> <p>The number officially listed as missing hit 100,000 this week. Families of the disappeared say the magnitude of the crisis and the lingering perception that many victims were involved in crime have made the public numb to the issue.</p> <p>"It's easy to say 100,000 and so what?" said Grace Fernández, a spokesperson for a national umbrella group representing families of the disappeared. "Apart from us, who are part of the 100,000, no one else cares."</p> <p>Her brother, Dan Jeremeel, went missing in 2008 in Coahuila state at age 34 after he failed to show up to pick up his daughter from a friend's house.</p> <p>"Roundabout of the disappeared," a banner announced to passing drivers, some of whom honked in support.</p> <p>"You need to scream it, you need to talk about it," said one demonstrator, Rosaisela Guzman Milla, who doesn't leave her house without fliers bearing pictures of son Luis Angel, who was kidnapped at his home in 2018 at age 25.</p> <p>The day after the demonstration, authorities cleared the area and later installed blue metal barriers. But the families kept returning to tape photographs of the missing on the fence. Civil groups across Mexico urged officials to respect the families' claim to the public space.</p> <p>The country's national registry of the disappeared goes back to 1964. Among the cases during the first couple of decades were hundreds of people on the political left whose disappearances were later tied to the Mexican army.</p> <p>The numbers skyrocketed after Mexican President Felipe Calderón launched a war against the drug cartels in 2006. About 75% of the missing are men.</p> <p>The disappeared come from a variety of backgrounds and include migrants and victims of human and sexual trafficking or cartel violence. Some are thought to be women who left home to escape domestic violence.</p>

The United Nations' Committee on Enforced Disappearances reported last month that organized crime is a "central perpetrator of disappearance in Mexico" and that "public officials on the federal, state and municipal level" are often directly involved.

The committee noted that as of November, fewer than 6% of disappearances had resulted in prosecutions. It said that local search commissions lacked funding and that agencies failed to coordinate to conduct searches.

The search commission in Mexico state works with law enforcement to gather recordings from street cameras and look for the missing in places such as hospitals, forensic facilities and detention centers.

But its leader, Sol Salgado Ambros, said search efforts are sometimes jeopardized because prosecutors fail to provide information quickly.

Finding the missing is also partly difficult because Mexico also faces a forensic crisis, with tens of thousands of unidentified bodies in public cemeteries and mass graves.

"The panorama is really bleak," said Angélica Durán-Martínez, a professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts in Lowell, who studies drug violence in Mexico.

Families of the missing have tried to draw attention to the crisis by renaming public spaces for their loved ones.

On Wednesday night, the families returned to the closed-off roundabout in Mexico City — crossing into traffic to tape more photos onto the barriers.

"Son, listen, your mother is in the fight!" they chanted.

Sonia Hernández Camacho pointed to a photograph of her son, Daniel, who she said lived in Mexico City and was kidnapped in 2020 on his way to Veracruz state to sell a car.

The kidnappers had called her, threatening to cut off her son's hands unless they received \$40,000 within a week. Her family began gathering the money, but the kidnappers never called again.

She has searched for her son in jails even as she has confronted the possibility that he might be dead. But "there's been no results," she said.

Standing nearby, Maria Isabel Cruz Bernal from Sinaloa state said that her son had been planning his wedding when he disappeared in 2017 at age 28.

Yosimar, a police officer, was kidnapped from his home several months after he had helped respond to an ambush of military officers in the state capital, Culiacan.

His disappearance led Cruz to create a collective that has searched for bodies in mountains and rivers. The families she organized have found more than 380 corpses.

"He's a kid," she said. "He smiles and has glasses and loves the movies."

Her collective has hung photos of the missing in a plaza in Culiacan's historic district. Every month, several dozen gather there with objects that represent their loved ones. Cruz brings quesadillas, one of Yosimar's favorite foods.

"Taking over public spaces gives voice to the disappeared," she said. "It's so that they don't disappear a third time. First by the perpetrators, second by authorities and the third by their own families, who forget to shout their names."

HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Indiana police: 2 dead, 3 injured in shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/21/two-dead-three-injured-Goshen-Indiana-shooting/8281653180620/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/21/two-dead-three-injured-Goshen-Indiana-shooting/8281653180620/</a>
GIST	<p>May 21 (UPI) -- Police in Indiana said two men were killed and three women severely injured in a "targeted" shooting at a house in Goshen.</p> <p>The Goshen Police Department <a href="#">said in a news release</a> that officers responded about 3:20 p.m. to a report of a shooting at a Rosemare Court house where five individuals were reported to be "severely injured."</p> <p>One man was pronounced dead at the scene and a second man was transported to Goshen Hospital, where he was later declared dead.</p> <p>Two women were air-lifted to a trauma hospital in Fort Wayne and a third woman was taken to a trauma hospital in South Bend, police said.</p> <p>"Preliminary information indicates that the shooting was targeted, not gang related, and there does not appear to be any further threat of danger to the community at this time," police said.</p> <p>Police did not disclose any arrests or suspects in the case. The investigation is ongoing.</p> <p>"The Elkhart County Homicide Unit has assumed responsibility for the investigation, with ongoing assistance of the Goshen Police Department," the news release said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 Tacoma police: 4 teens injured in shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/4-injured-tacoma-shooting/LK5HERUYTVGUZAQECYEUTAQXYI/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/4-injured-tacoma-shooting/LK5HERUYTVGUZAQECYEUTAQXYI/</a>
GIST	<p>Police are investigating after four people were injured in a shooting in Tacoma on Saturday, according to the Tacoma Police Department.</p> <p>According to TPD, a person in a car shot at another car around 5:30 p.m. at South Yakima Avenue and South 56th Street in Tacoma.</p> <p>Three girls ages 15, 16, and 17 were hit, along with a 17-year-old male. An 18-year-old male was also in the car but was not hit.</p> <p>The victims drove themselves to St. Joseph Medical Center to be treated for non-life-threatening injuries.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/21 San Bernardino shooting: 1 killed, 9 injured</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/san-bernardino-shooting-party">https://www.q13fox.com/news/san-bernardino-shooting-party</a>
GIST	<p><b>SAN BERNARDINO, Calif.</b> - One person was killed and nine others injured during a shooting in <a href="#">San Bernardino</a> Friday night.</p> <p>Officers with the San Bernardino Police Department responded to a shopping plaza at the 3600 block of E. Highland Avenue just before midnight.</p> <p>When officers arrived on scene, they located one victim dead outside a business. They say nine other people were shot while attending a party.</p> <p>One of the victims was as young as 10 years old and another was 12 years old. Many of those people transported themselves to the hospital. Their conditions are not known.</p>

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>"I hear pop, pop, pop. The oldest one got into the front seat, the other victim I had in my car was scrunched down into the bottom part. But the blood right here is from my child that was shot in the thigh," said the grandmother of one of the victims.</p> <p>Surveillance footage from a nearby 7-Eleven shows the girls asking for help before being taken to the hospital.</p> <p>Witnesses and some family members say the victims were attending an after-prom party at the Blue Flame Lounge. They believe an altercation occurred between two groups of people.</p> <p>"I heard more gunshots and then we all got up, started trying to get underneath each other to not get hit," said witness Lamiyah Ramos.</p> <p>The person who died was only identified by family as a 20-year-old man. His family told FOX 11 that they believe he was an innocent bystander who was caught in the middle of crossfire.</p> <p>Police are looking for the suspect(s) responsible for the shooting. A clear motive is unknown.</p>
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